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Portraits of Resiliency: A Qualitative Study of Appalachian Christian Women

Dissertation submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University

In Partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Psychology

By
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Abstract

Portraits of Resiliency: A Qualitative Study of Appalachian Christian Women

By: Joy A. Butcher-Winfrey

The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate how some women in Appalachia create meaning and purpose when faced with challenges, problems, and crises and how they make it through these difficult events. The following research questions informed this research: 1) What role does spirituality play in the process of resiliency; 2) How does a relationship with a higher power enhance a woman's ability to bounce back from difficult situations; and 3) How do some Appalachian Christian women find meaning and purpose when faced with challenges, problems and crisis and how do they make it through? The study involved collection, compilation, and analysis of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with 5 Appalachian women identified to have experienced at least 3 challenging events that the average person would find to be adverse. Three broad themes emerged which included Support Systems, Self-Efficacy, and Spirituality. Within the broader themes 9 meaningful clusters were identified and included family, social networks, internal locus of control, self-healing, inner strength, purpose, place, faith in a Higher Power, faith development, and faith practices. This research suggests that the spiritual task of creating meaning and purpose is an important aspect of resiliency. Further, the research suggests that a relationship with a higher power enhanced the participant's ability to bounce back from difficult situations, acted as source of hope and self-acceptance, and helped her to find growth, meaning, and purpose in her life.

THIS DISSERTATION IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING HONOR
OF
MY MOTHER
THE MOST RESILIENT WOMAN I KNOW
ROBERTA LEE VINCENT BUTCHER
(1943-)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
Portraits of Resiliency.....	1
Appalachian Christian Women.....	2
Aspects of Resiliency.....	3
Resiliency Defined.....	4
Social Support.....	5
Self-Efficacy.....	6
Spirituality.....	8
Defining Spirituality.....	9
Religion versus Spirituality.....	10
Resiliency, Spirituality and Psychology.....	11
Empirical Studies of Spirituality and Resilience.....	14
Current Study.....	16
Methods.....	19
Selection and Rationale for Qualitative Methodology.....	19
Procedure for Selection.....	22
Procedure for Interviews.....	23

Data Collection.....	25
Data Analysis.....	25
Self as Researcher.....	27
Results.....	28
Demographic Information.....	29
Brief Description of Adversity Experienced by Participants.....	29
Cassie.....	29
Christy.....	30
Miriam.....	30
Rachel.....	31
Tabitha.....	31
Findings.....	31
Theme One - Support Systems.....	31
Family.....	33
Social Networks.....	34
Theme Two-Self-Efficacy.....	35
Internal Locus of Control.....	36
Self-Healing.....	37
Inner Strength.....	39
Purpose.....	40
Place.....	42
Theme Three - Spirituality.....	44

Faith in a Higher Power.....	44
Faith Development.....	46
Faith Practices.....	47
Discussion.....	49
Theme One - Support Systems.....	50
Family.....	50
Social Networks.....	51
Theme Two-Self-Efficacy.....	54
Internal Locus of Control.....	55
Self-Healing.....	56
Inner Strength.....	58
Purpose.....	59
Place.....	60
Theme Three - Spirituality.....	61
Faith in a Higher Power.....	61
Faith Development.....	62
Faith Practices.....	63
Conclusions.....	65
Research Questions.....	65
What role does spirituality play in the process of resiliency?.....	65
How does a belief in a higher power enhance a woman's' ability to bounce back from difficult situations.....	66

How do some Appalachian Christian women find meaning and purpose when
faced with challenges, problems and crisis and how do they make it through?....68

Limitations.....	70
Future Directions for Research.....	72
Conclusion.....	72
References.....	74

Figures

Figure 1.	Participant Demographics.....	100
Figure 2.	Theme One – Social Support.....	101
Figure 3.	Theme Two – Self Efficacy.....	102
Figure 4.	Theme Three – Spirituality.....	103
Figure 5.	A representation of the Overlap in Spirituality with other areas of Resiliency.....	104

Appendices

Appendix A-	Request To Participate in Study.....	105
Appendix B-	Informed Consent/Confidentiality.....	106
	Research Participant's Acknowledgement of Informed Consent.....	112
Appendix C-	Interview Outline and Questions.....	113
Appendix D-	Portraits of Participants.....	115
	Cassie.....	115
	Christy.....	123
	Miriam.....	130
	Rachel.....	139
	Tabitha.....	150

Portraits of Resiliency: A Qualitative Study of Appalachian Christian Women

What makes a resilient woman resilient? “Resilience involves necessary developments over time that foster the ability to ‘struggle,’ surmount obstacles, and go on to live and love fully” (Walsh, 2003, p. 1). The propensity to transcend negative experiences can often assist individuals in moving from feelings of victimization to observing the experience as an opportunity to create new meaning (Rothberg, 1990; Walsh, 1999). Resilience research focuses on protective factors, buffering effects, personal characteristics, family conditions, environmental supports, and self-concept. It is important that psychologists be aware of the factors that impact clients, professional practice, their communities, and society.

A number of findings suggest the expression of both organized religion and other expressions of faith in the daily lives of Americans (Gallup, 2007) and a number of Americans indicate that they believe in God (Yntema, 1999). As the climate of American culture changes, psychologists are seeking more ways to assist clients and communities. By addressing a client holistically and incorporating spiritual interventions, there is a belief that the whole person can benefit from counseling (Faiver, Ingersoll, O’Brien, & McNally, 2001).

The following sections will be a review of unique aspects of Appalachian Christian women, aspects of resiliency, how spirituality may be defined, and how resiliency and spirituality fit together. Finally, the contributions of the current study will be presented.

APPALACHIAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN

Appalachia spans an area of 205,000 square miles from Mississippi to New York. The Appalachian region includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 additional states. For the purpose of this study an Appalachian women is defined as a woman who was born within the geographical bounds of the region and has spend the majority of her life within the region.

The literature is practically nonexistent in regards to the experience of women in Appalachia, let alone the study of Appalachian women's resilience. Much has been written about the invisibility of women's history (Arnow, 1991; Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Kahn, 1973; Lyon, 1998). This history becomes more visible every day as historians explore the unwritten stories of women's lives. Contributions of women beyond the private sphere of home have often been overlooked or, at best, minimized.

The literature typically tends to be stereotypical in describing the Appalachian's women's experience. Kahn (1973) points out that Appalachian women are often depicted as "mournful creatures, covered with dust and grime, their thin mouths hardened into a grim expression. Typically, the women are seen as "hopeless, helpless, and passive" (p. 17). Women in Appalachia have been subjected to stereotypes such as being hyper-sexual, aggressive, overly fertile, and masculine (Massey, 2007). Tripp-Reimer and Friedl (1977) describes the idea of living for the moment and in the present as an orientation embedded in Appalachian culture. Some studies associate the Appalachia culture with fatalism (Rosswurm, Dent, Armstrong-Persily, Woodburn, & Davis, 1996; Tripp-Reimer, 1983).

An Appalachian woman's perception of "place" is discussed in the modest research conducted with Appalachian women. The research suggests that these women identify "place" in history, family, the shape, and context of daily life and the environment as important aspects of their identity (Engelhardt, 2001; Hayes, 2006; Lyons, 1998; Miles, 1975). Miles' (1975) narrative book about life in Appalachia discusses "the place" that surrounds Appalachian women as a source of strength for women against the violence and oppression they may face. Strong attachment to family, community, and place is common to Appalachians. This strong attachment may contribute to an individual or family sense of identity and security (Buttera & Maughan, 2005). Hayes (2006) suggests that Appalachians have a strong tradition of "planting" themselves in one place and staying there.

Hayes (2006) studied traditional cultural norms that influenced attitudes and decisions to assess health care in Appalachian women. He found that the participants used prayer, rest, solitude, exercise and creative activities to deal with illness and as prevention for illnesses. Similar research (Bauer, 2003; Simpson & King, 1999) investigating Appalachian culture suggests that Appalachian people have a strongly religious culture, with many churches throughout the mountain communities.

ASPECTS OF RESILIENCY

Many factors have been found to enhance resilient behavior in women. These factors include social support, self-efficacy and spirituality. The literature is rich with definitions of resilience that spans three decades of research and resiliency has come to be viewed as a dynamic interplay of multiple risks and protective factors. The literature

review of resiliency begins by exploring definitions of resilience and the protective factors of social support, self-efficacy and spirituality.

Resiliency Defined

Many definitions of resilience require specification of an identified risk or challenge to which an individual is subjected, followed by some defined measure of positive outcome. Resiliency has been defined and described in the literature as “the process or capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten, Best, & Garmery, 1990, p. 426); as the innate capacity for self-correction and survival in the face of adversity (Benard, 2004); as positive outcomes shown by resilient persons across several aspects of his/her life over periods of time (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1997); as the possession of multiple skills, in varying degrees, that help individuals to cope (Reivich & Shatte, 2002) and as the ability to withstand the stressors of life and challenges to healthy development (Rutter, 1987). Resilient individuals have the ability to change, adapt, and/ or engage a difficult situation rather than avoid the situation and face the adversity in their lives (Bogenschneider, 1998). Thus, resilience is defined “broadly as those skills, attributes, and abilities that enable individuals to adapt to hardships, difficulties, and challenge” (Alvord & Grados, 2005, p. 238). It is the “ability to restore balance following a difficult experience and integrate it into the backdrop of one’s total life experiences” (Garmezy, 1993, p.127). Adversity as Webster (2001), defines is “a state of wretchedness or misfortune; poverty and trouble,” (p. 1220) which implies conditions that require tremendous fortitude to overcome, such as poor environmental or economic conditions, death, separation, divorce, poor health, etc.

O'Rourke (2004), citing Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn (1982) work, suggests that psychological resilience reflects a "pervasive belief that one can respond under stress effectively" (p. 268). Drawing on Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn's work on hardiness, O'Rourke suggests that: "1) Resilient persons espouse a commitment to living- the tendency to engage fully in daily activities 2) Resilient persons enjoy challenge and believe that change rather than stability is normal. From this perspective, life's hurdles provide opportunities to increase one's skills and self-knowledge and 3) Psychological resilience entails the perceived ability to exercise control over the circumstances of life" (pg 268). This produces a sense of personal autonomy and the belief that one is able to directly affect life's destiny.

Reivich and Shatte (2002) have identified key intrapersonal factors or abilities that appear to increase overall resilience in adolescents and include those of social support, self-efficacy and spirituality. Boanno (2004) suggests that hardiness is an aspect of resiliency. "Hardiness consists of three dimensions: being committed to finding meaningful purpose in life, the belief that one can influence one's surroundings and the outcome of events, and the belief that one can learn and grow from both positive and negative life experiences" (p. 27). For the purpose of the current study resiliency is defined as those skills, attributes, and abilities that enable women to overcome hardships, difficulties, and challenges that most people would deem adverse, restoring balance and integrating events of adversity into the backdrop of one's total life experiences.

Social Support

In a meta-analysis by Brewin, Andrews, and Valentine (2000) social support appears to be an important resiliency factor. Schumm, Briggs-Phillips and Hobfoll

(2006) citing studies by Kaniasty and Norris suggest that perceived social support defined as the perception that help will be available when needed and received social support defined as the help that has already been provided in times of crisis are two distinct constructs. Further, Schumm, Briggs-Phillips and Hobfoll (2006) suggest that perceived social support is a direct predictor of psychiatric adjustment. Caring relationships both within the family system and outside the family system have been identified as factors of resiliency in numerous studies (Wright, 1998; Herman, 1992; Bachay and Cingel, 1999, Werner, 1989). From her work with women who survived trauma, Herman (1992) concluded that caring relationships have been found to facilitate healing and recovery following a sexual assault. In another study of midlife women, McQuaide (1998) noted that the women who were most resilient and coped optimally in their middle years were socially connected to others. Revich and Shatte (2002) identified the ability of reaching out—being comfortable and willing to connect with others in order to deepen one's relationships and gain support through difficult times as an intrapersonal factor of resiliency.

Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy appears to be another important aspect of resiliency. Bandura (1994) defines “perceived self-efficacy as people’s belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (p. 71). Reivich and Shatte (2002) identified self-efficacy as being confident in one's ability to identify and implement coping and problem-solving skills that are well-suited to the situation as an ability that appeared to increase overall resilience in adolescents. “Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate

themselves and behave” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Factors that have been found to serve as resources for self-efficacy include: ascribing blame to an external actor versus internalizing blame; internal locus of control; maintenance of a positive view of self or self-esteem; self determination; and the ability to foster caring relationships outside the family (Wright, 1998). Among the resources or protective factors Wright (1998) noted are: active problem-solving; the ability to see the value in painful experiences; faith that adds meaning in life; the presence of nurturing adults who may act as parent figures; and the ability since childhood to procure attention and support from others. Such resources may enhance the ability of women to affect their environment so as to receive from it those responses that foster efficacy.

In a qualitative study of minority female graduate students, Bachay and Cingel (1999) also determined constitutional and relational factors that enhance resilience. Respondents attributed their success within a paternalistic culture to self-determination, their faith in God, and optimism about life. Optimism was found to be a factor of resilience in adolescents (Reivich and Shatte, 2002). Ethnic identity, issues of power, and the experience of poverty are cultural influences that contributed to the strong sense of self in the respondents (Bachay & Cingel, 1999). Further, the minority female graduate students had a positive view of themselves and maintained a high level of self-efficacy. McQuaide (1998) posits that one of the primary resiliency factors for women is their ability to construct their life stories in a way that recognizes explanations of women and aging that counteract the culturally prevalent derogatory view of older women.

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is difficult to define and describe because it is unique to the individual and may consist of multiple experiences. There are consistent themes that surface in the contemporary literature regarding spirituality. Roof (1999) states that some of the spiritual themes prominent in the United States today are: 1) experience and meaning, 2) interconnectedness, and 3) responsibilities and values. Human beings are motivated toward finding meaning in their experiences (Jones, 2003; Maslow, 1971; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Spirituality can mean ethics and morality, theological reflection, communication with spirits, prayer, meditation, and other spiritual practices. Spirituality is also often associated with healing and psychological growth (Rothberg, 1993).

Eighty percent of the population in the Western hemisphere and Europe belong to one of three major theistic world religions: Christianity, Judaism or Islam (Richards & Bergin, 2005). About 95 % of Americans believe in God or a universal spirit and the number has remained above 90% for 50 years (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999, 2007). Other research suggests that 35-40% of the general population and 50% of psychologist's surveyed report having had at least one experience that they deemed to have been spiritual (Allman, de la Roche, Elkins, & Weathers, 1992; Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, & Benson, 1991; Kass, Lukoff, Turner, & Lu, 1993). The practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer or meditation, irrespective of an acceptance of, or adherence to, a specific religious faith, is also associated with increased numbers of spiritual experiences (Glueck & Stroebel, 1978; Murphy, 1992).

The interpretation of and reaction to challenge is especially important to resilience, for how one perceives an event can determine the adverse effects. The

literature includes consistent themes of meaning and purpose as components of spirituality. Deriving meaning from adversity can help an individual process the adversity and can allow the individual to “bounce” back from adversity. Roof (1999), states that experience and meaning, interconnectedness and responsibilities, and values are current spiritual themes prominent in our culture today. Frankl (1959) states that meaning and purpose is in all human experience and becomes the foundation by which people can endure seemingly insufferable conditions. Rothberg and Macy (1994) affirm that when individuals experience suffering, exploring the meaning of these events can provide important insight and worth for the individual. Transcending the adversity of pain and suffering through a close connection with a higher being can make the experience endurable moving one toward meaning.

Defining Spirituality

Rothberg (1993) defines spirituality as the principles and practices that facilitate the individual’s movement toward a fuller alignment with what is considered personally “sacred.” Spirituality is viewed as both an understanding of the meaning of human existence and as the process that assists the movement toward a sense of wholeness and well being in self and others, eventually resulting in spiritual practices. Spiritual practices are acts of dedication, discipline, and concentration that provide a path for the individual to move into alignment with the “sacred,” toward an internal transformation of self and their perception of others. These acts of spiritual discipline may include prayer, journaling, meditation, altruism, etc.

Richards and Bergin (2005) define spirituality as the invisible phenomena related to oneness with a personal God, transcendence, and thoughts and feelings of

enlightenment and harmony. Spirituality may or may not involve a belief in God or a higher power. According to Burke, Chauvin, and Miranti (2005) “Spirituality can also be viewed as the highest level of any line of development” (p. 4). Spirituality may be, for some, the highest achievement in life.

Many people may find expressions of spirituality within culture or religion, while others may experience spirituality outside of culture and religion. Spirituality in the United States transformed in the 1960s and 1970s and was greatly influenced by eastern thought and emerging secular movements (Taylor, 1999; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Psychology and other humanistic movements were also impacted by this change in spiritual climate. Centers for spiritual growth emerged such as Esalen which merged various religious and philosophical ideas with psychology (Taylor, 1999).

Some have identified spirituality to be at the core of human existence, particularly wellness (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Spilka, Shaver, and Kirpatrick (1985) define three roles that spirituality serves in the coping process: (1) It helps individuals to answer meaning-of-life questions; (2) It offers individuals an increased feeling of control over stressful situations; and (3) It increases individuals’ feelings of self-esteem, often by providing them with a source of community and family. For this study, being spiritual represents a transcendental relationship between the person and a Higher Being.

Religion versus Spirituality

Spirituality can be viewed in contrast to religion. Religion is defined as an organized, communally shared, ritualistic system of beliefs, practices, and the association of meaning to symbols or icons designed to bring about a connection to the divine (Canda, 1989). Religion “relates to thought, feeling, and action; to concerns of individual

and social existence; and to the expression and recognition of values” (Cunningham & Kelsay, 2002, p. 13). It is typically expressed in a community that shares a set of guiding teachings, rituals, beliefs, and experiences focusing on a specific God, deity, or higher power (Wiggins-Frame, 2005; Zinnbauer et al., 1997).

Religion is seen as a public display while spirituality is a more private acknowledgement of connection with a meaningful entity (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Spirituality is seen as a more universal concept. Formal religious dogma can be taught whereas spirituality is discovered through an individual journey in search of one’s connection to the divine and the persons’ search for meaning, purpose and value in life (Canda, 1989; Wiggins & Frame, 2003). The Christian belief, referred to as faith, in a personal and sentient God can be conceived of as a spiritual construct outside the confines of organized religion.

Rowatt and Kirkpatrick (2002) state that for many people the perception of a relationship with a personal God is a source of refuge in crisis that can provide a secure base for finding the meaning of life in the midst of adversity. Guillory, (2000) identifies spirituality as a way of being that assists individuals in how they respond to their life experiences.

RESILIENCY, SPIRITUALITY, AND PSYCHOLOGY

Reports of personal spiritual experiences have been associated with increased psychological and physical well-being (Hay & Morisey, 1978; Murphy, 1992). As the literature suggests, understanding the self and others requires “doing” or “experiencing” in order to find meaning (Emmans 1999b; Fontanna, 20003; Gall, 2003), an identified component of spirituality. For example, in order to have a deeper spirituality one must

often engage in a deeper spiritual practice. Meaning is found in the experience of the individual and it is the individual's personal responsibility to create new access to the meaning and to use it intelligently. The literature includes the repeated themes of meaning and purpose as components of spirituality, as well as the resiliency to survive even the worst conditions with the knowledge that one's life has meaning and thus moves one toward this lived transformation of self and community (Jones, 2003; Jung, 1933; Maslow, 1971; Pals, 2006; Paragament, Magyar & Murray-Swank, 1997; Silberman, 2003, 2004, 2005a; Singer, 2004). Spiritual experiences may help individuals to find value in what they do and who they are in the world and as such may be an important component in how an individual overcomes adversity. Writing about the strengths perspective and the treatment of substance abuse, Moxley and Olivia (2001) note that their approach in promoting recovery encourages the client and the clinician to focus on the meaning of life and the higher purpose that binds us all together.

Carl Jung (1933), wrote extensively about the connection between psychology and spirituality. Jung suggested the concept of incorporating spirituality into psychotherapy. Jung called the journey towards wholeness the process of individuation which is essentially a spiritual journey. Thus attending to the voice within enables the individual to achieve a new synthesis between conscious and unconscious. The self is the God within. This movement brings individuals toward a sense of acceptance, detachment and a meaning of life. Storr (1983) suggests that by fulfilling his or her own highest potential, the individual is realizing the meaning of life and fulfilling God's will.

Existentialist thinkers, such as Frankl, view suffering as a potential springboard both for having a need for meaning and for finding it. Frankl (1959) states that meaning

and purpose is in all human experience and provides a foundation by which people can endure seemingly insufferable conditions. According to Frankl (1985), the healing of the soul was the purpose of psychotherapy. The spiritual aspects of human beings were seen as the heart of the personality, it is what makes us human. Frankl described three dimensions of personality he termed somatic, mental and spiritual, which were forerunners to our present language of mind, body and spirit. Logotherapy, Frankl's version of psychotherapy, honored man's spirit. The term logo signified spiritual and meaning to Frankl.

Critical reflection on an individual's assumptions about the world can enable change in current belief patterns. One begins to discover that one can move from old belief systems to a new, higher level of what is considered "sacred" or greater than self (Chopra, 2000). Yalom (1980) suggests that "self-transcendence" is a natural method, whereby an individual finds meaning beyond one's own self-interests. In his theory of self-actualization, Maslow (1962) embraced the concept that the individual has an inherent tendency toward growth in pursuit of a fuller expression of altruistic personality traits. These traits become authentic through the individual's unique experience and the meaning given to the experience.

Jung (1967) wrote that with meaning there is an opportunity for people to endure almost anything. Frankl (1959) described how important it was for those in the concentration camps to find meaning in the suffering. Yalom (1980) states that full living evolves when individuals face existential issues: death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. These matters provide ways of affecting one's awareness of self and community as well as one's experiences, particularly those of adversity. Spirituality is an

important part of life that the counseling field has failed to sufficiently address (Ivey, Ivey, Myers, & Sweeney, 2005). In the Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) article on positive psychology, psychologists are described as knowing how people survive and recover from adversity, but know very little about what makes people flourish.

Empirical Studies of Spirituality and Resilience

There is a growing body of literature documenting that spirituality can be studied empirically (MacDonald, 2000). Various studies (Chandy, Blum, and Resnick, 1996; Kane et al. 1993; Kennedy, Davis, & Taylor, 1998; Reinert and Smith, 1997) have found that women who had experienced childhood sexual abuse and who viewed themselves as religious or spiritual tended to be less at risk for psychological or interpersonal problems in adulthood. In these same studies spirituality and religion was found to act as a constant system on which they could rely for a sense of personal safety and emotional comfort. Increased reliance on spirituality related to a greater sense of restored well-being. Survivors of childhood sexual abuse voiced a need for spirituality in their healing and ability to make meaning of the trauma. Valentine and Feinauer (1993) conducted a qualitative study of 22 women survivors of sexual abuse who were considered to be at high risk for psychological difficulties. Several themes of resilience emerged from their interviews: ability to secure social support, a sense of positive self-regard, external attribution of blame, perceived internal control, and spirituality. Spirituality was identified as a protective factor against the development of depression, shame, and interpersonal difficulties. Spirituality appeared to act as a source of support, to aid in the process of meaning-making, and to provide a source of inner strength and belief in self for these women survivors. Having a sense of life purpose appeared key to overcoming

the abuse and maintaining a sense of well-being in adulthood. Other studies have found that women survivors of childhood sexual abuse often turned to spiritual behaviors such as prayer and spiritual experiences for support (Glaister and Abel, 2001; Lawson et al., 1998; Pargament & Brant 1998).

Various studies in aging describe spirituality and resiliency to be dimensions of human life that evolve throughout life and gain momentum in the later years that then become resources for coping (Langer, 2004; Senter, 2001; Singleton, 2004; Rackilin, 1999). Among a number of studies of the elderly, Koenig, George, & Peterson, (1998) found that spirituality is an important factor in recovery from depression. Older persons frequently cite faith as the primary reason for their ability to cope with or even to transcend stressful circumstances in their lives.

Connor, Davidson, and Lee (2003) found that spirituality emerged as a way of coping with violent trauma. Contrary to their hypothesis, spirituality did not prevent PTSD symptoms but provided a resource in the act of meaning making in regards to the trauma experienced. Within the growing body of literature, spirituality has been connected with positive coping after trauma and acute illness (Khouzan & Kissmeyer, 1997, King et al., 1998, Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996). Drescher & Foy (1995) suggest that spirituality can help in restoring hope and balance following a traumatic event where survivors must come to terms with an unsafe world and world events that occur without meaning. The connection of resiliency and spirituality/religion has also been studied with medical conditions.

Studies regarding the connection between resiliency and recovery from pain or stress with populations with chronic pain suggest that positive emotions may play an

important role in fostering recovery after episodes of severe pain. Religious affiliation, frequency of attendance at worship and religiousness were associated with resting diastolic and mean arterial pressure (Lawler & Younger, 2002) as well as a source for positive emotion. One mechanism by which positive emotions may play a role in the regulation of negative states that accompany pain has been proposed by Zautra, Johnson and Davis (2001). Heightened pain as a stressor would narrow the range of emotional experiences leading to an increasingly inverse relationship between positive and negative emotions during pain episodes. Thus, the presence of positive emotions may become more critical to preservation of well-being during times of high pain as well as during other stressful times. Mindfulness meditation, a long standing discipline of spiritual inquiry has been found to sustain positive affect in chronic pain patients (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth & Burney, 1985). Mindfulness meditation has been found to provide a framework for cognitive reinterpretation for women diagnosed with breast cancer (Bontempo, 2004). Connections between spirituality and resiliency have been found in studies of racial wounding (Fullerton, 2003), single parenting families (Greef & Ritman, 2005), and gender roles (Sinclair, 1986).

Current Study

This study contributes to the literature of coping and how meaning and purpose is developed in the face of challenging situations. How adults narrate their most difficult experiences reflect processes and outcomes of narrative identity construction that are rooted in pathways of personality development and have implications over time for important outcomes, including maturity, subjective well-being, and physical health (Pals, 2006). The growing body of literature within personality psychology asserts that (a)

identity in adulthood takes the shape of a coherent narrative or life story that integrates interpretations of the past with the present self and provides life with meaning and purpose, and (b) the processes of constructing, revising, and living in accordance with this narrative identity over time are central to personality functioning, development, and well-being (McAdams, 2001; Singer, 2004; Singer & Blagov, 2004). The experience of divorce, the loss of a job, and the diagnosis of a serious illness, while experientially distinct, are similar in that they all have the potential to challenge the life story that had been providing a person's life with coherence, meaning, and purpose (Cohler, 1991; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Difficult experiences, as challenges to identity and an inevitable aspect of adulthood, constitute critical building blocks within the life story that not only reflect but may also meaningfully shape how adults progress through their lives and survive the adversity that life inherently brings.

This study also contributes to the understanding of resiliency of women; principally Appalachian women. The literature suggests that the field of psychology knows quite a bit about how people survive and recover from adversity, but knows very little about what makes people flourish (Glicken, 2006). Rather than simply eliminating or changing problem states, therapists must focus on the treatment goals of identifying and enhancing strengths (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The present study contributes to the understanding of the role of spiritual factors (i.e., relationship with God or higher power) in the current emotional functioning and well-being of Appalachian women. It has only been recently that studies have started to test various models of how religious and/or spiritual factors might function in adjustment (e.g., Belavich & Pargament 2002). Thus if indeed, as the author suspects, a woman's

spiritual practices enhance her ability to flourish or thrive, these can be identified as potential strengths incorporated in therapy to promote well-being and understanding of the client.

This study contributes to the existing literature that is rich with studies of resiliency, spirituality, and the connection between resiliency and spirituality in the treatment of medical conditions, such as breast cancer (Bontempo, 2004; van der Pompe, Antoni, Visser & Garssen, 1996); lowering heart rate and blood pressure (Lawler & Younger, 2002); physical health and chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth & Burnery, 1985; Zautra, Johnson & Davis, 2005); and diabetes mellitus (Wee, Lee, Ravens-Sieberer, & Erhart, 2005). In addition, the literature speaks to these same connections in the treatment of sexual trauma and post traumatic stress disorder (Chew, 1998; Racklin, 1999; Senter, 2001; Singleton, 2004; Tilus, 2003; Valentine & Feinauer, 1993; Weber and Cummings, 1999,); racial wounding, (Fullerton, 2003); and ageing (Blieszner, & Ramsey, 2002; Braun, 2000).

Many of these studies address particular populations of women, such as the African-American woman (Few & Rosen, 2005; Singleton, 2004). However there is little or no discussion about the role of spirituality in building resiliency and deriving meaning out of adversity with the specific population of Appalachian Christian women. This study examines characteristics of resiliency displayed in Appalachian Christian women to better understand how they can “transform a situation, build on it, and grow from it” (Polk, 1997, p. 2).

The purpose of this study was to understand what role, if any spirituality plays in the process of resiliency or more simply how do some women in Appalachia create

meaning and purpose in their daily living when faced with challenges, problems, and crises and how do they make it through or “bounce back.” In addition, as the literature suggests, how does a relationship with a personal God or higher power enhance a woman’s ability to “bounce back.”

It was my assumption as the researcher that a positive association between resiliency and spirituality would be established and further that a relationship with a higher power would enhance a woman’s ability to bounce back from difficult situations contributing to the process of finding meaning and purpose in their lives. The following research questions informed this research: 1) What role does spirituality play in the process of resiliency; 2) How does a relationship with a higher power enhance a woman’s ability to bounce back from difficult situations; and 3) How do some Appalachian Christian women find meaning and purpose when faced with challenges, problems and crisis and how do they make it through?

METHODS

Selection and Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology was chosen as the research design for this study, as it can yield an effective understanding of this phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) asserts that phenomenology’s role is “to determine what an experience means for the persons who had the experience and to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 113). In a qualitative study, “designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 39), but rather seeks “to understand the world from the perspectives of those in it” (Merriam, 1995, p. 56). “A typical way of gathering material

is through interviews that often take the form of dialogues with” one’s research participant and the researcher (Moustakas, 1990, p. 48).

Qualitative research is ideal for clarifying and understanding phenomena and situations when operative variables cannot be identified ahead of time; finding creative or fresh approaches to looking at over-familiar problems; understanding how participants perceive their roles or tasks in an organization; determining the history of a situation; and building theory, hypotheses, or generalizations” (Meriam, 1995, p. 52).

Patton (1990) insists that “the only way to fully understand something is to experience it” (p. 69) and “descriptive data gathered through qualitative inquiry can be used to inductively and holistically understand human experience” (p. 37). In order to understand participant’s experience of adversity and resiliency, I entered the homes and work places of the 5 participants in this study for interviews and observation of their daily lives.

Creswell (1998) makes the comparison that qualitative study is like a tapestry of “intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material” (p. 13). The phenomena of both resiliency and spirituality as discussed in the literature review are like the fabric in Creswell’s metaphor, in as much as both phenomena are “not explained easily or simply” (p. 13). Therefore the researcher must “enter into it fully” (Moustakas, 1990, p.11). Patton (1990) observes that researchers using “qualitative methods strive to understand a phenomenon as a whole” (p. 49). He notes, “The emphasis on holistic understanding in qualitative methods is in sharp contrast to the logic and procedures of much evaluation conducted in a quantitative-

experimental tradition” (p. 49). The “goal of qualitative research is to understand the particular in depth rather than to find what is true of a larger population” (Merriam, 1995, p. 57). Consequently, the stories of the participants become the data.

The holistic data yielded themes inductively reasoned from a series of semi-structured interviews with the participants to make sense of the phenomenon. Patton (1990) asserts that the “purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone’s mind” (p. 278).

The use of a small, non-random sample is one concern that is often raised of qualitative research. This concern implies issues regarding generalization, replication, researcher bias, and validity and reliability of the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. “Internal validity asks the question: How congruent are one’s findings with reality?” (Merriam, 1995, p. 53). In an attempt to ensure that the interpretation of the “reality” of this study is “true” to the phenomenon of spirituality and resiliency four strategies were used to ensure the internal validity of this study. Triangulation, in the forms of in-depth interviewing, observations, and literature review were used in analysis of emerging data. Member checks were carried out, taking data collected from the participants and initial interpretations of data back to the participants to see if the interpretation was accurate to their perceptions and experiences. Peers and colleagues were asked to examine the data and to comment on the plausibility of the emerging findings. Finally a disclosure of the researcher’s experiences, assumptions, biases (discussed under the heading of “self as researcher” in the Methods section) was included so as to enable the reader to better understand how the data was interpreted (Merriam, 1995).

Procedure for Selection

The phenomenology research literature is clear – it is very important to carefully select participants (Denzin, 2000; Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Patton, 2002). The first step is to appropriately define the phenomenon being studied so that it can be understood by the prospective participants. A critical step prior to advertising for participants is to make the criteria for selection explicit. The selection criteria for this study were: 1) Appalachian women who reported they have spent the majority of their lives in Appalachia and have family roots in Appalachia, 2) women who have had three situations of adversity over their lifespan, i.e. adversities evolving from issues including poverty, suicide attempts, abuse, divorce, miscarriages, minority, being denied opportunities because they were women, experiences of death within family units, poor social/cultural/emotional environment, difficult marriages, health issues, etc. 3) and who are now successful or thriving. Each individual participant was deemed successful or thriving by their ability to adapt to their life situations and successfully achieve their goals or a sense of well-being.

Participants were identified through a process of “snowball sampling” and “intensity sampling” (Patton, 2002) using personal contacts, referrals from colleagues working in the ministerial field as well as the field of psychology and contacts through the university community. These contacts or information-rich informants were asked questions such as: “Who has experienced great adversity and seems to be striving? Who should I talk to?” Intensity sampling or purposeful sampling consists of “information rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely” (Patton, 2002, p. 46) involving some “prior information and considerable judgment on the part of the researcher” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). This type of qualitative sampling is described as

“purposive, rather than random,” requiring interest in the subject matter by the participant (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). As a result of my inquiry, 20 prospective individuals were identified. Four participants did not meet the prescribed definition of an Appalachian woman. Six potential participants did not meet the number of adverse events described in the proposal. The remaining 5 potential participants were excluded for a variety of purposes, such as availability, interest and richness of their stories.

Procedure for Interviews

All prospective participants in the study received an introductory phone call. Each prospect was interested and met the basic criteria for selection. Participants were made aware of the research's goals, anticipated time commitments, methodology, their role in the study, and risk assessment (i.e. that it could be painful to review difficult experiences). Confidentiality was reviewed and participants were told that confidentiality would be afforded according to APA ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained. Data access and ownership (i.e. that they would have the opportunity to read and check or clarify transcripts of interviews and that all data would be owned by the researcher) was reviewed. Finally, the role of the researcher was discussed and though trained in therapy would serve as researcher and not a therapist. Each participant was given a letter of introduction along with the research agreement. Each participant was asked to set aside a period of immersion in which they could contemplate the question: “What difficulties in life have I experienced and how did I cope?” In addition each woman was asked to collect dreams, mementos, and creative aids to bring to the interview.

At the initial meeting I explained the scope of the research study, and reciprocity (i.e. the right to read the results). Participants signed an agreement to be in this study.

(See the participation forms Appendix A) Participants were given information regarding my current position as a student at Marshall University prior to consent. The informed consent and confidentiality agreements were signed. (See Appendix B) Each participant was asked to tell her story(s) of adversity, describing the impact of the experience on her life, and the ways in which she was able to cope with the challenge of these experiences. When each participant indicated that she had adequately covered these experiences, each was asked to discuss her understanding of the meaning made of these experiences. Finally each was asked about aspects of spirituality, meaning, and purpose she had volunteered. Session guidelines (See Appendix C) with general questions or topics to be addressed were used as needed and any new topics introduced by the participant were discussed.

The experience of the interview was much like that described by Ray (1999), as a “copresencing,” which means sensing the other by recognizing the immediate impact of each other’s being on each other. This concept is what Ray calls “the compassionate ‘we.’” I took many of my cues from the participant, and great respect was held for the sensitive and meaning laden experience of the interview. Each participant actively participated in the difficult task of reliving their painful experiences and very little prompting by the researcher was needed to maintain flow of the conversation.

Each interview was both audio and video recorded and transcribed by a bonded mental health secretary and returned to the researcher for study. Field notes were taken during each session. The transcriptions entered in the researcher’s home computer of both video tapes and field notes were coded with a number and each participant was given a factious name to further protect her identity. In addition, names of communities and local

areas were disguised so as to further protect the identity of the participant. Audio and video tapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home and retained for three years following IRB's guidelines for research studies.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted with five Appalachian women who have experienced at least three adverse situations in their life. The raw data was used to develop a portrait of each participant's experience and the participant was later contacted for feedback on the developing portraits to ensure that I had adequately captured her experience. The interview relationship emphasized connectedness and relationship and used a conversational informal dialogue format. Dialogue in each session involved cooperative sharing in which the participant and researcher opened pathways by sharing personal experiences with each other for explicating the phenomenon of resiliency being investigated. I collected written field notes during the sessions which included observational comments and site descriptions, audio tapes and CD's, samples of journal entries, newspaper clippings, photographs, and personal letters that each participant perceived helpful in the understanding of her story. The descriptive notes and recordings became the qualitative data or field text that I used to develop themes in the analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the participant interviews was coded and categorized using the ATLAS ti., a qualitative research data analysis program which utilizes an open and axial coding system to identify emerging categories and the relationships among those categories. ATLAS.ti is a workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio and video data.

While listening to and viewing the tapes, I followed the written transcriptions to construct a descriptive portrait of each woman presenting a holistic portrayal of her situation frequently using her words. Individual depictions of each participant were developed rather than two or three as suggested by Moustakas (1990). I sought the opportunity for each woman to have an equal voice in this study.

I began this process by breaking down each story reported by participants. Aspects of the participant's stories of resilience were then labeled with a word or phrase that I felt best expressed the resiliency phenomenon. In some instances responses provided by participants conveyed more than one phenomenon. I proceeded through each interview identifying and labeling the responses with similar names based upon the phenomenon that was represented. After identifying the various phenomena within the data I grouped, also known as categorizing, those concepts that was similar. I implemented open coding to identify and categorize the concepts that emerged. Next, I utilized axial coding to explore the connections and relationships among the emerging categories, properties and their dimensions. Throughout the axial coding process interview transcripts were continuously revisited. As a means of potentially explaining the resiliency phenomenon the data was organized and new relationships and connections among the patterns and themes were discovered. Once these themes were inductively established and arranged in meaningful clusters (Patton, 1990) the "thick data" of the participants' experiences with the phenomenon was analyzed (Moustakas, 1961, 1990; Patton, 1990). The final "member check" occurred at this point and revisions were made. The analyses of the transcriptions and participant responses were initially labeled under three broad categories that represent the experiences of these resilient Appalachian

Christian women: *Support Systems, Self-Efficacy and Spirituality*. With these themes a composite depiction of the purpose and meaning of resiliency and the sources of coping used by these resilient Appalachian Christian women was developed.

Self as Researcher

Unlike quantitative research which often uses assessment tools, in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Patton, 1990). Furthermore, Rubin and Rubin (2005) characterize the researcher as a conversational partner. Either of the above interpretations of the researcher places him/her in an intimate position with the topic being studied and the participants encountered along the way. Creswell (2006) identifies the roles the researcher takes as investigator and learner which guide him/her throughout the interview process. Therefore, it is paramount in qualitative research, particularly in this study, that the researcher's voice and position be presented.

I have been an ordained minister for twenty-four years and this experience as a minister has been the catalyst for this study of resilient Appalachian Christian women and the meaning spirituality holds for them. This concept of spiritual purpose as a factor of resiliency has led to further questioning and a broader perspective when examining the daily experiences of adversity. For many years, I observed women in Appalachia overcome tremendous adversity, overcoming difficult and often negative experiences yet seeming to thrive in spite of or because of their experiences. In my experience many Appalachian women seem extremely resilient, demonstrating high levels of self-control, compassion, professionalism, ingenuity, optimism, creativeness, and love. Their dedication to family, church, community, and personal interest is inspiring. These

behaviors reveal some of the noblest acts of self-sacrifice and altruism. These women appear to have an ability to transform negative experiences, re-creating their emotionally charged frustrations into new meaning and compassion. Conversely, I have experienced many women in Appalachia who do not thrive, and each experience of adversity may seem to result in lower self-esteem, failure to succeed in self-care, career and relationships.

In addition I identify as a resilient Appalachian woman having survived and thrived in spite of multiple adversities in my life similar to many of the adversities shared by the participants. I acknowledge the role spirituality has played in making meaning of life in my own experiences. As a minister trained in a liberal seminary and trained in spiritual direction, my spiritual journey has evolved from theologically conservative to liberal with influences from feminist theology, mindfulness, contemplative prayer, and traditional spiritual disciplines.

Professionally, I identify as a supervised psychologist, ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and as a spiritual director holding memberships in American Psychological Association, the American Counseling Association, National Board of Certified Counselors, Spiritual Directors International, Association for Clinical Pastoral Counseling, Appalachian Studies Association, and maintains her credentials as clergy in the West Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. As a member in these organizations, my position places me close to the phenomenon in this study.

RESULTS

The information from this study has been gathered and organized into overall themes. A composite depiction of the experience of coping and constructing meaning

growing out of the participant's experience of resiliency is offered in this section. The composite depiction "provides enough information or description of the phenomenon under study so readers" in the field of psychology, religion and spirituality, and Appalachian studies "will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research questions" (Merriam, 1995, p. 58).

Demographic Information

Participants in the study live within the bounds of Appalachia in West Virginia and Ohio. The age range of the participants was within the age range of forty-four to seventy-eight years of age. Of the five participants, one woman identified as African American and four women identified as Caucasian. In regards to education each woman had attended college, two women received Associate degrees, one woman received a Bachelor's degree and two women received Master's degrees. Three women were presently employed while two of the women were retired. Two participants were divorced, one participant was widowed, and two women were currently married. Three women were active members of churches. Two women had been raised in the church but were not currently actively attending a specific church. All participants claimed a belief in God and practiced various spiritual disciplines. (see Figure 1)

Brief Descriptor of Adversity Experienced by Women in the Sample

A summary of the interviews has been presented in order to note the commonalities and distinctions of the participant's experiences of adversity.

Cassie

Cassie (77) experienced multiple events of adversity in childhood and in adulthood. She was molested by an uncle at the age of 3 and later by a neighbor as a

teenager. She grew up in poverty first living in a coal mining town and later in an isolated rural area. Her father was an alcoholic and often abusive to family members. She was “farmed” out to elderly neighbors and young mothers and expected to provide nursing and babysitting services as a teenager. She was forced to move across the state to attend a business college against her will. As an adult she married a quadriplegic and cared for him until his death 16 years ago. She adopted and raised her cousin shortly after his birth. The decision to marry her husband and adopt an infant who was developmentally delayed caused further estrangement from her family. The long illness and death of her husband was a difficult period in her life as she continues to struggle with the grief and loneliness of widowhood.

Christy

Christy (46) at age 11 discovered her father’s body minutes after he committed suicide. In the aftermath of her father’s death and remarriage of her mother with an abusive stepfather, Christy was first forced to leave her mother and home to live with her grandparents as a result of abusive threats from her stepfather. Eventually her mother moved the family covertly to another state for the family’s protection. Within a few years of relocation and at the age of 21, Christy’s mother died of cancer leaving her to raise her 14 year old brother who was abusing drugs.

Miriam

Miriam (55) was raised in an alcoholic family. She married at the age of 17 to escape her dysfunctional home only to find herself married to an alcoholic who subsequently abandoned her with an infant son. Her second marriage was to another alcoholic who sexually and physically abused her. Miriam describes her experience as

being “bound in a stereotypical role of Appalachian women.” Consequently, she survived 20 years of a dysfunctional marriage in fear for her life.

Rachel

Rachel (78) grew up in poverty stricken coal camps where her family was one of the few African American families in the area. She endured racial harassment, segregation and prejudice in the school system, higher education, the community and in the workplace. She married an abusive man whom she divorced and was forced to raise her two children alone.

Tabitha

Tabitha (44) was raised in poverty by her grandmother after being removed through Child Protective Services as a result of abuse and neglect in her mother’s home. She was a high school dropout. She abused alcohol and was sent to prison as a result of beating her 9 year old son. After her release from prison she felt limited to options and choose to live in the small town where the incident with her son occurred so as to be near her children and in attempt to obtain custody of them. As a result of her decision to return to the area, she experienced the harassment and criticism of the community.

Findings

In order to stay consistent with the participant’s fundamental qualities, results will be presented as descriptions of the themes that most closely define the essence of these women’s experience. Three themes relating to the phenomenon of resiliency emerged from the analysis of the transcripts described in the Methods section: *Support Systems*, *Self-Efficacy and Spirituality*. The first theme of *Support Systems* included the meaningful clusters of *family* and support provided by *social networks* (i.e. church,

community organizations, organized support groups, etc.) The second theme of *Self-Efficacy* included the meaningful clusters described as *internal locus of control*, *self-healing*, *inner strength*, *purpose* and *place*. *Spirituality* included *faith in a Higher Power*, *faith development*, and *faith practices*.

The three emergent categories of support systems, self-efficacy, and spirituality reflect these women's perspectives of their lived experiences as resilient Appalachian women (see Figure 2-4). The "voices" of the participants will be interwoven throughout the text in the form of quotations describing the essence of the phenomenon.

In the following section each major theme and meaning cluster will be discussed in relation to the existing literature in the field of psychology. Individual portraits or depictions of each participant's story of adversity are provided in Appendix D.

Theme One - Support Systems

The significance of supportive relationships emerged as the first theme in the participants' response to the research questions. Two meaning clusters of support systems included *Family* and *Social Networks* (See Figure 1). Participants deeply valued their relationships with family, friends and those who came within their sphere of influence or community. These connections seemed to inspire the participants' attitudes towards respect, altruism and compassion in their relationships. These women appeared to project the awareness that social bonds and responsibilities transcend individual privilege.

Each story began with descriptions of the relationships within their family of origin and most ended with mentioning the significance of relationships in their current lives. There seemed to be an indication that as they aged, the participants valued their relationships with others even more.

Family

The first cluster of Support Systems is family. The participants have been both positively and negatively influenced by their family, especially by their parents. Participants shared the influence that their parents had on their lives and the ways they were influenced by their parents.

Cassie: The very family that sometimes gave you no choices was the family that saw what you needed and brought you back.

Christy: ...And I remember my twin brother, That's why I think I got along so well in life because I always had my best friend with me. And everybody always loved my best friend and I had him. I've never been alone. We didn't have nothing but we had everything, I knew I was loved, we had Jesus with us. When you have love you can do anything, you can go through anything as long as you've got somebody there beside you. And that's what we did have, that's the feeling.

Miriam: I lost my best friends when I lost my parents. They were both great strength, they would listen to anything. I guess in their own way they were supportive.

Rachel: If it hadn't been for Mom taking care of the kids I wouldn't have made it. If it hadn't been for her I don't think I would have done it, that why I came back because I knew I needed family.

Tabitha: My grandma had raised me good and stuff. My uncle, my Mom's brother is the only 2 kids my grandma had so he is more like the father figure in my life than more like an uncle. He comes sees us all, he

don't have no kids of his own, he was married a couple times but he had no kids, so we were all like his kids. Even our kids are like his kids and stuff, he takes them to football games just like he did us. He makes sure he goes and visits everybody and everybody's ok. He's still a positive role model, as I put it the only one that had sense enough to graduate high school and get a job. So he has been a positive person throughout all our lives.

Social Networks

The second cluster of Support Systems is the influence of social networks. Participants described relationships beyond their family systems that were significant in helping them to survive adverse experiences as well to foster meaning and purpose in their lives as a result of these experiences. These social networks included the church, music groups, Alcoholic Anonymous groups, employers, ministers, neighbors, and friends.

Cassie: I tell you the church quartet took me with them. I was with that group more time than I was my own family; I owe a lot to that group. We made tapes and CD's. I went to churches and met different people, were in services. I can't remember when we started but anyhow I owe that group a lot. God never closes the door...I felt people laying their hands on me and it was my crew. They gave me reason to get up, clean up and go and be a part. There were times I felt like I couldn't, but I made myself go. Grief is a draining thing, your stamina is shot.

Christy: I love how God puts people in your life. So it [gospel quartet] was like family, my family wasn't here so it was like I got new family and it was a good ministry for like 5 years.

Rachel: I had a lot of very good friends. I had several good ones, they even took care of my children while they were in school, I wouldn't have been able to make it without them. After I started to school I met this lady at the Presbyterian church, and she was the director of the daycare and I had been there for field placement as we had to go out to different schools to practice being a teacher, She liked me so well she said there are grants if you want to go back to school. So she helped me to get grants to pay for my college and she was great but it was a hard time for me.

Tabitha: ...a good friend of mine, a lady that I worked for, came and got me out on bond and she took me to her house and that's where I started going to 12 step meetings and she gave me back my job. Because I had no idea, and it was just one big nightmare and up there I didn't see her, she came to visit me one time. But she wrote me letters. I got 2 letters a week from her or one a week and they were life giving. They were like chapters, She would label them chapter 1, chapter 2 and the people from the program would send me cards, the people that me and my grandmother went to church with in WV, they would send cards, you know, and things like that.

The significance of self-efficacy emerged as a second theme in the participants' response to the research questions. Five meaningful clusters were identified and included: *Internal locus of control*, the ability to accept responsibility for their decisions, *self-healing*, the ability to learn from their mistakes and to learn from others, *inner strength*, the ability to persevere in spite of the obstacles that faced them, *purpose*, such as caring for others and the need to overcome or rise above the negative people and influences that threaten progress *and place*, or belonging within community, to the environment and objects.

Internal locus of control

The first cluster of self-efficacy is internal locus of control. In the stories of these five participants it was notable that each did not blame others for their own difficulties in life. They seemed to have an internal locus of control and believed that they had control over their lives, no matter how traumatic their lives had been in the past.

Cassie: You learn to accept a lot of things; if you don't you get bent out of shape...and I knew that I had a choice; if somebody sent me away then I could refuse to go.

Christy: It wasn't until we returned to West Virginia that I learned that I could control my life. I lived in that farmhouse for a year with my little brother, during the winter when we had to crawl under the house to unfreeze the pipes, I knew I could survive...I knew that with God's help I could work things out and choose what I wanted to do with my life.

Miriam: ...when I got to a point where I couldn't stand myself that's when I started making changes. I started working at Ohio University and

he wasn't happy with it because it was liberal. I was going to become independent and leave him, I really thought I loved the man. I had a counselor tell me I was addicted to him like he was to alcohol and I looked at that and said what is there in this man to love. I was finally fed up with his treatment and started making plans to live on my own. I opened an account; I paid off all my bills. I chose not to live with somebody who was living such a dangerous life. I guess that's when I started working towards getting out.

Rachel: In my journey as a child, my drive was to show everybody I can do it. I don't believe in just standing by and waiting for somebody to do for me. At some place you need to stand back and look at yourself, remember what they taught you and you need to go back to your roots, if not you're going to be in trouble. Racism - that's their problem, that's not mine. I feel very good about myself. I told them from the very minute I am a very proud woman, and to make it more interesting I am a proud black woman. If they should hurt me they won't know about it, because people feel good to know they've gotten their way.

Tabitha: I try not to worry about what everybody else says or does affect me. As long as my faith is there I have to do it for me, because if I don't do it for me then I'm not going to be helpful for no one else anyway.

Self-healing

The second cluster of Self-efficacy is self-healing. These women were open to new ideas, new directions, and new pathways to resolve life crises suggesting the ability

to learn from others as well as from their own mistakes. These attributes might be considered good coping skills that were beneficial in learning about self and finding ways to problem solve. In addition they were able to put the past in context, not dwell on the past, and move on with their lives. It seemed that these women developed self-correcting abilities as they grew older. In at least one woman's experience of living her life one day at a time was self-healing.

Cassie: It is, if your mother doesn't believe you, no wonder I never told anybody. And she said you want to take lessons, get back over there and take them. I didn't forgive my mother until she was operated on for an aneurism. I prayed to God that if he'd let her live, I'd forgive her and I didn't realize I held it against her until I had to get my act cleaned up for God to ask him to do that, and he did.

Christy: And I learned more from Mom that month and a half because I was listening. It's not until you become what you're supposed to be so that other people can grow. You are first before you can do anything else. ...whenever you get screwed up is whenever you start that tunnel vision and you think about me, me, me, me.

Miriam: I always said I didn't listen to my mother, that's what happened. My older sisters didn't listen. We didn't listen to what they told us, and you pay. At some place you need to stand back and look at yourself, say they taught you and you need to go back to your roots, if not you're going to be in trouble.

Rachel: What I decided from my upbringing was that I do not have to cater to anybody and nobody is my boss. I felt I was penalized for being a woman. A woman's place is in a home; her place is to take care of a man. I decided this can't happen to me. I was a prisoner in my home. After my son and daughter were born, I said that's it I am not letting this happen, it would've stifled them.

Tabitha: I have forgiven my mother and the way she treated me as I was growing up. I know now that she was doing the best she could do at the time...with what she had at the time...because of some of the stuff that's happened in my life, I guess I learned the hard way, or I have a better understanding of it now because some of the stuff that I did in my life that's where I was at that point of time. I was doing the best that I could at that point in time, the best that I knew how to, and today I see where I did wrong and I know that was the best I could do at that time.

Inner Strength

The third cluster of Self-efficacy is inner strength. Each participant indicated the possession of common sense and practical wisdom that allowed them to become better problem solvers. These women seemed to possess the ability to make connections between events and their responses to them. They were able to persevere with work assignments, educational challenges, difficult but rewarding relationships that required the ability to continue without giving up. They exhibited careful planning and time to complete goals. In addition a sense of optimism accompanied the perseverance exhibited by these women.

Cassie: You learn to accept a lot of things; you don't get bent out of shape. Not being good, not to be good, but its always striving, there's no diploma out there until you get to the end, our graduation.

Christy: I want my children to know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you can walk the road that your journey is on no matter what. I make them to look on the bright side of things and that's what you gotta do in life.

Miriam: ...but I had been alone, he prepared me for single life. He was never there. I enjoyed my own company, I had to learn to entertain myself. I read, I crocheted, I filled my life with beauty.

Rachel: ...and that's why, I bounce back because that was built into me as a young woman. She [mother] would say, 'you don't know what you're going to have to go thru before you leave this earth so you better get strong to face it.'

Tabitha: I said I think I'm going to school. And so then I went to Hocking and wanted to go through the social work program, but then they told me that there was a waiting list and I could get another degree while I was waiting so I chose Human Service. Now, they told me that because I had been incarcerated that I probably I would never be able to work in this setting. So I left and I went to the school and then I did my internship, I talked to my instructor, which was my supervisor during my intern at the time and I said we need to go in a private room, and we did. I said I can't come back here and do my intern. And he said how come? And I said because they told me since I was incarcerated for endangering a child.

And I told him what happened and he went out and talked to the director of the program and I went out and did my internship.

Purpose

The fourth cluster of Self- efficacy is purpose. One purpose the five participants identified was the belief that helping others served as a positive outlet for the wisdom they've gained as survivors of adversity. In each of the participant's story they often placed the needs of others before their own and were socially responsible with a high degree of personal integrity and honesty.

Cassie: Yes, I wanted to have piano lessons, I liked music. So I stayed nights, a week at a time and worked for mine in the summer time, the rest of them paid 25 cents a lesson. We did all kinds of farm work with chickens, pigs and cow.... I loved my dad and mother, I loved them then but I'd never give my child away. I guess that's the reason we kept R [adopted son] home, I know how I wanted to be at home so I didn't want to go sending him some place. He knew where he belonged. Stability. I'm thankful now I went, you see sometimes God puts you places if it's your idea or not and later on you realize that's the way it was supposed to be.

Christy: It was hard the only thing that got met through was thinking about S. [younger brother] and the promise I made, it really kept me going. Because I was at where people are at one time and I want to help them.

Miriam: ...just plain old survival from one day to the next, I thought I was in love for 20 yrs and would do anything to make things work for the kids

Rachel: I think the incentive was that dad said you have to get an education. He said if you don't get an education you are going to be working in somebody's kitchen. I did not want that and I saw what my mother went through and I didn't want any part of that. Another thing that drove me was that one of the white teachers down here had come to our school and all she ever taught was how to make a bed or how to wash a dish because she had no idea we would go on and want to be teachers. I thought I am going to prove you wrong, that's what really drove me... because of the families. I understood them because my life was not so far from them, its just that I think I had a better upbringing because my dad believed in doing what you had to get where you needed to be and you were not to stand still and wait for somebody to give it to you. He said 'nobody's going to give you a thing, you are going to have to fight and claw your way.'

Tabitha: I give back to programs and when I was there I said that one day that I wanted to give back and that's what I came to school for.

Place

The fifth cluster of self-efficacy is "place." The use of the notion of place refers place as being both physical and emotional. One participant spoke about the importance of finding a physical place where they felt connected to others and experienced a sense of

belonging. Three participants referred to place as being in the position to be productive, in service to a personal God and Higher Being and to others.

Cassie: I found the place that I belonged after I was married and I found God. He [husband] was very kind and independent. Spoiled me rotten, if I mentioned anything he'd buy it, if I even wanted it or not. That was such a contrast, I belonged, I got everything I even mentioned, and we didn't really have that much money but he managed. When I started going to church, it seemed like I was supposed to be there. I'm just thankful that I got to go to church. I know I was to be in God's house

Christy: There is nothing like being in that feeling being at exactly at that right place where God exactly wants you to be. I feel like I've got a home anywhere, I can make my home anywhere.

Rachel: I got to work with the rural child; I have a vision for those kids because they aren't treated well at all. I found out when I started visiting homes these children had nothing. I am in Preston County by choice. My family will say why don't you move away? But I am here by choice, I always said I wanted to raise my family here and I did. I saw a lot of things happen to young people in the city and I didn't want that to happen to my children. I thought my children aren't going to be raised here. I came back here and really worked.

Tabitha: I do things and I help more people in the program. It's just facing that fear, you know, because the more you do it the easier it gets. Because that's where I've been that's what got me where I'm at today and

stuff and it's part of my life, you know, and I can't undo it. I have to accept my past and live in the present. I am comfortable now where I am and I have found my place helping others as I have been helped.

Theme Three - Spirituality

The significance of Spirituality emerged as a third broad theme in the participants' interviews. Participants most often spoke of a sense of connection when making reference to a personal God, higher power or faith base. For the participants, spirituality is something that is entwined throughout their lives; it is much more than a set of doctrines or rituals. Some described feeling connected with other people as a "spiritual" experience. Participants indicated the connection with a personal God or a faith base generated a positive, optimistic way of relating to other individuals as well as proving the strength to overcome the obstacles in their life.

Three meaningful clusters clarify the components of how spirituality and the spiritual task of constructing meaning and purpose of adversity informed their lives. These three clusters include: *faith in a Higher Power*, *faith development* (i.e. Church, AA, etc.) and *faith practices* (i.e. prayer, scripture, etc.).

Faith in a Higher Power

The first property of Spirituality is faith in a personal God or Higher Power. Participants in the study identified a relationship with a personal God or Higher Power as a stabilizing force in their life that enabled each woman to feel connected, helped them to make meaning in the face of adversity and allowed them to feel known and loved when others in their life were absent or indifferent. This relationship with a personal God provided acceptance, love and purpose to their lives.

Cassie: ...next to God's love unless, you can't really feel what God feels for you. I don't know what they were attempting to do but I knew it was wrong, but anyhow, God was with me, that the only one that could ever protect me. You didn't know that much did you? God was with me, that's the only thing

Christy: I just remember that he [brother] wasn't there and I think that is why I was scared, but I had to go on a different bus, I have no idea why but God had somebody there to protect me. Everything else in life changes but Jesus will never change, daddy will leave, momma will leave, everybody leaves but Jesus never will. God's always taken care of me and it's like, its like I always know there's a big plan and these are just wee little parts to it down here...there were different things in my life, more than anything I had to be what God made me to be, even though I'm not there yet, but I am on my way there. I remember who I am, not what I am, who I am, and whose I am. It's not me, it's not my life, we're not here for ourselves. God plants us in places for others and sees us through to help others.

Miriam: My faith has got me through my whole life; I don't know what I would've done without it. I believe that he will provide, but I also believe what some people say 'the Lord helps those who help themselves.' I feel I have to do everything I can to help myself. But He's always there, even being sick I don't question why this is happening to me, I know He's not

doing it, He's not making me sick, I know that. My husband and I both have deep faith. I think my faith grows as I grow

Rachel: I have never in my whole life questioned God for what I am because I guess maybe I learned from a child to accept things and knowing he is the ultimate, he is the one that did it, so I am good.

Tabitha: I knew that there was a higher power and stuff like that but I thought that he had left me but more or less I left him and um...So He said 'if you need me, I'll be there. And as long as I keep doing what I am doing I'll be there.' I guess today my faith, it's more than it was back then because, and I don't know if it's my age too, the older you get the more you know you need to believe in something other than yourself or what is in this world.

Faith Development

The second property of Spirituality that emerged is faith development. For the study, participant's faith development included early experiences of attending church, relationship with ministers, and the devout modeling of family and friends. Cassie, Christy, Rachel and Miriam stated that their early experiences in church enabled a sense of being known and being in the right place. Four participants felt accepted and free to be themselves within the church community. One participant described her process of faith development more in the modeling of specific individuals who claimed a faith.

Cassie: Also in all those times I was in church every Sunday. Sometimes, somewhere along the way I've been searching and knowing that's the place to be.

Christy: Then we went to church, and here we are the hicks from the sticks but momma always taught me to be myself. And they loved us hicks that wore the same dress Sunday after Sunday. In Church I finally got to be who I wanted to be and not who everybody thought I was.

Miriam: My faith in God has always sustained me and I learned that in church. It's the same as learning to swim, I don't remember not, I do remember vaguely we went to church as a family, when Dad dropped out Mom took all four of us and then I just clicked in the environment.

Rachel: We had good ministers, that's how I got into the church. My mother was a very devout Christian and I always wanted to be like her and I didn't understand the Bible like she did. I never saw my mother without a Bible, without a prayer. If she wasn't praying she sang. And she had a good friend that was the same way and if I wasn't around Mom I was around the friend.

Tabitha: When I was with her [grandmother] we would go to church on Wednesday nights and Sunday morning and Sunday nights....but it was my grandmother who taught be about God and how to live right. Because of what she taught me I quit going because I was so uncomfortable with what I was doing in all the in between times.

Faith Practices

The third property of Spirituality is faith practices. Participants reported spiritual disciplines that included prayer, beauty, scripture, mysticism, and life guide books.

These spiritual disciplines were aspects of participant's daily lives and helped guide their personal growth and understanding of life events.

Cassie: So anyhow I prayed to God to let him [husband] be near, he [husband] died 29th of December and that same prayer was continuous. [Cassie tells about finding a childhood picture of her husband in the bottom of a drawer. The inscription over the picture read, 'Look who's here!'] Thank you God, you've answered my prayer, look who's here he said... Well you know when good news happens who do you call that doesn't think your crazy, I called Preacher Post. He said 'are you all right,' I said 'I'm fine.' I think that clenched it with me and God.

Christy: There is something that I have to share with you that happened to me and there was a time in my life when I forgot it. But I remember walking in from the middle room where we had a library, and I walked into the kitchen, and I remember, it had to be first grade, and it was really before I knew what the concept of love really was. That feeling I guess, of love. And I remember walking into the kitchen and whenever the Holy Spirit deals with me, I don't know what it's like, but it turns my attention a certain way, it is like something you can't even control sometimes. I remember it made me turn all the way back and I looked and there was a picture of Jesus on the wall, and a golden light was coming out from that picture, and the picture itself almost crinkled. I don't know how to explain it, but there was a life force coming from that picture, and I knew it was a perfect glow, and all I wanted to do was run and jump into that

picture. I mean I just wanted to go and disappear into that, because I knew that feeling, and that feeling is what's got me through. God let me see just a little glimpse of heaven.

Miriam: Prayer definitely I know He's always available, but just life in general. I didn't see a lot of this before I met H. [husband], I see what God's given us. Since I've met H. I've seen trees and flowers birds and flowers that I didn't know existed. My life was so tied up in pain and crisis all the time I didn't see what God had laid out before me and now I can appreciate it. I do think He had a hand in H. and me, I mean what are the odds?

Rachel: But you know something, if you stand your ground on anything you feel is good and if it says it in the Bible, and I use my Bible a lot, and it works, you will find people who will go with you. The Bible has given us that courage.

Tabitha: AA has become a place of security for me. Following the steps in the Big Book gives direction to what I do. Sometimes I have to go back and repeat steps....when I come upon friends from the past, I have to rework the steps...you know forgiveness and making up for what I did.... Conversations I had in my room with God would get through those long nights in prison.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that contribute to resilience in Appalachian Christian women and the contribution of spirituality in the process of

surviving and thriving from adversity. During the exploration of resiliency and spirituality three themes emerged: *Support Systems, Self-Efficacy, and Spirituality*. These themes have been illustrated by the words of the participants and this section will explicate the experiences of resiliency and will evaluate the findings of the fundamental nature of this experience with existing literature.

Theme One - Support Systems

Family

The concept of family is an important and vital aspect of the Appalachian tradition. “Ties of kinship and family relationships are highly valued in Appalachia” whereas, “extended family members often play important decision-making roles even though the ties are less formal than is the case in mainstream American culture” (Butera, 2005, p 113).

Several of the women, Rachel, Christy, and Tabitha, recalled having the experience of a caring, supportive relationship with one or more adults in their early years that sustained them throughout life. Grandparents, older siblings, and close family friends provided emotional support and encouragement to the women as they grew up and individuated from their families of origin. In her retrospective study of adult survivors of childhood adversity Higgins (1994) also found early relationships as significant to positive adaptation in adulthood. Research participants transcended negative childhoods, in part, through the experience of at least one nurturing relationship with an adult prior to reaching maturity. Regardless of how minimal or infrequent the contact with the caring other in the early years, participants reported helpful interactions that subsequently guided their behavior in relationships as adults (Higgins, 1994). For

Christy, Rachel and Tabitha, who had experienced familial dysfunction in one form or another as children, those early nurturing connections contributed to their adaptation to adult challenges. Two of the women, Tabitha and Cassie, whose parents were deceased or inaccessible, relied on positive memories of special adults who had provided encouragement in a surrogate parent role such as a mother-in-law, aunt or mentor.

Glicken (2006) referring to the article “The Changing American Family” suggests that children have more life success when raised by caring and cooperative parents who have adequate social and financial resources. “Parents who monitor and supervise their children inside and outside of the home, who encourage growth enhancing activities, and who then move toward shared decision making and responsibility with children as they mature are likely to have the healthiest and most resilient children” (Glicken, 2006, p. 187). Parents who are “uninvolved, unresponsive, rigid, controlling, disengaged, overly permissive, risk their children’s emotional well-being and may result in “less emotionally strong and resilient children” (Spieker, Larson, Lewis, Keller, & Gilchrist, 1999, p. 457). Yet resilient children often come from families that do, in fact, have many of the risk indicators for social and emotional problems, and still they do remarkably well. One reason is the strength of the family to survive in the midst of trauma and to develop deep levels of resilience in children (Patterson, 2002; Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997). As an example, Jackson and Warren (2000) report that children who received little family social support but could understand why and didn’t define the lack of support as rejection displayed less internalizing and externalizing behavior than children with higher levels of family support but with lower positive ratings. These results suggest that positive perceptions act as a protective factor for children. For example, as a result of her

experiences in adulthood Tabitha experiencing extreme dysfunction in her family of origin was able to derive meaning of this familial dysfunction through the relationships she experienced in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). This experience in AA further enabled her to cope with and understand the similar dysfunctional behavior of her son.

In very dysfunctional families, often the strongest child is singled out for special treatment because the child represents a degree of protection and stability for the family and suggests a possible means of survival through his or her success. These children may be asked to take on significant family functions which leads to higher self-esteem and promoted attributes of resilience (Walsh, 2003). This was the case for Cassie, who reported that her parents sent her away from the home on several occasions to care for ailing family members and neighbors or children of family members. While having to leave home to care for others was not Cassie's choice, these actions may served to provide the family with a perceived integrity within the larger family unit and wider community. Cassie reports that the accolades of others served to compensate for her personal sense of loss of connection to her family.

Social Networks

All participants in the study indicated the value of social networks in both overcoming adversity and making meaning of the adverse experiences in their life. Seeking support and assistance from others has been linked to decreased emotional or psychological distress (Staunton & Snider, 1993), better psychosocial adaptation (Heim, Valach & Schaffner, 1997), and a greater perception of well-being (Flipp, Klauer, Freudenberg, & Ferring, 1990). Social support refers to a social network's provision of psychological and material resources "intended to benefit an individual's ability to cope

with stress” (Cohen, 2004, p. 676). The stress buffering model suggests that participating in social networks contribute to health by providing psychological and material resources needed to cope with stress (Cohen, 2004). Further social integration is thought to influence an individual’s sense of self and emotional tone. Cohen (2004), citing his earlier research (1998), suggests that social interaction aides in emotional regulation that increases positive affect and helps to limit the intensity and duration of negative affective states. Christy described the experience of neighbors who provided physical and emotional assistance that allowed her to realize and to accomplish a major transition in her life.

As indicated by a meta-analysis by Brewin, Andrews, and Valentine (2000), social support appears to be an especially important resiliency factor in women who experienced sexual trauma. In a study of the impact of social support and trauma, Schumm, Briggs-Phillips, Hobfoll (2006) found the role of perceived social support to be a resiliency factor, particularly for women who experience recurrent traumatic experiences across their lifespan. Their results suggest that women who are able to maintain a strong sense of social support availability in the face of trauma experience less-severe levels of PTSD and depression. Both Cassie and Miriam reported incidents of sexual trauma and the support they either received at the time of the sexual assault or latter received as necessary aspects of recovery.

Vaillant and Mukamal (2001) identify six factors of successful aging which include the capacity for continuing friendships; creating positive interpersonal relationships; feeling satisfaction with their spouses, children, and family life; and assuming social responsibility in the form of volunteer work and civic involvement. In a

similar study, Rowe and Kahn (1998) define successful aging as including an active engagement with life and a strong system of social support. Cassie, Rachel and Miriam discussed adversity as part of the aging experience. These three participants described their relationships with others in small groups, their church family and their community activity as important factors in both their ability to overcome obstacles and in their search for life meaning and purpose. Glicken (2006), citing Rowe and Kahn (1998), suggests that

social supports are very important in maintaining successful aging and provide the following reasons: isolation is a powerful risk factor for poor health; social support-such as emotional, physical, and personal contact-has direct positive effects on health; social support can buffer or reduce some health-related effects of aging and adversity; and social support helps protect one against the stresses of life (p.144).

Disputing the common thought that resilience is “uniquely internal to a person,” Riessman (1997) identifying the common functions and purpose of self-help groups believes that resilience is “often a function of a person’s social support network.” “Supportive relationships provide a buffer against stress, allowing the individual to interpret the situation in a different and much less stressful way” (Glicken, 2006, p. 46). For example, Tabitha attributes her ability to stay clean and sober to the Alcoholics Anonymous program. In addition she further attributes the ability to understand the actions of other family members from the stories of other alcoholics shared in group meetings.

Theme Two – Self-Efficacy

Internal locus of control

Henry (1999) suggests, “resilient children often acquire faith that their lives have meaning and that they have control over their own fates” (p 522). In a 32 year longitudinal study, Werner and Smith (1982) found a strong relationship among problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and an internal locus of control in resilient children. A sense of control is important throughout life. Control may facilitate health-oriented action by the individual. Bergeman and Wallace (1999) found that older persons who see themselves as not having control in their lives exhibited physical or mental health problems. Persons who see themselves as in control tend to believe that they can influence events in their lives, thus realize a sense of well-being, or efficacy. Ramsey and Blieszner (1999) suggest that the way in which an event is perceived affects an individual’s health. By perceiving an event as controllable, the individual is better able to predict outcomes, and may experience positive benefits from the challenging event. It is remarkable that in spite of the negative situations in which the participants found themselves, the participants did not blame others for their situation. In fact, each participant indicated that part of their survival process was to accept responsibility for faulty decisions they had made. In addition, a degree of emotional well-being was achieved when the participants could understand what motivated the decisions of others who had a negative effect on their lives. Taken together, these processes helped participants to make meaning of their experiences and affected their subsequent decisions and actions. Rachel demonstrates this concept in her acknowledgement of the racism in her community. By understanding that racism is the racist’s problem and by understanding her own worth as both a human being and a Christian, she was able to

maintain her own integrity and self-control in situations when others attempted to make her feel less of a person.

Self-healing

Healing is "a process of bringing parts of ones self together at a deep level of inner knowledge, resulting in an integrated, balanced whole with each part having equal importance and value" (Dossey, Keegan & Guzetta, 2000, p. 6). Freeland (1984) suggests that accurate mental awareness is a crucial factor in emotional well-being and emotional self-healing. Schechtman (2005) stresses the importance of taking responsibility for oneself and the fact that self-understanding clarifies who we are, and what we think and feel. Participants identified the ability to look honestly at themselves, admit their mistakes and to learn from their experiences as important aspects of overcoming the adversity they encountered. Accepting the idea that in certain situations they did the best they could do with who and what they were at the time provided healing for past hurts and growth for the future.

In addition to the buffering factors of temperament and family and environmental support, research has shown self-concept to play a role in resiliency. When an individual has a healthy self-concept they are better able to counter the effects of adversity. The capacities to understand self and self-boundaries in relation to long-term family stressors like psychological illness, to enhance positive self-esteem as a result of adaptive life competencies, and to steel oneself in the wake of stress all act as protective factors (Rak & Patterson, 1996, p 370. Reivich and Shatte (2002) identified the ability to identify multiple and accurate causes of problems as an ability that appeared to increase overall resilience in adolescents. Tabitha described an "epiphany" when she was able to place in

perspective her mother's dysfunctional behavior towards her only when she was able to understand her own abusive behavior as an adult. With this understanding of her mother's actions and behavior she was able to let go the past and move on and change her own dysfunctional behaviors. She was also able to generalize this "causal analysis" ability in other areas of her life and as a means of reducing stress.

Kobasa (1979) suggests that individuals with the greatest "mastery" or control over what occurs in their lives will remain healthier, both physically and mentally than those who feel powerless. Frankl (1963) explains that the ability of individuals to choose their attitude in any given set of circumstances is what gives meaning and purpose to life. Bonanno (2004) suggests that self-enhancement or an overly positive bias about oneself is one pathway to resiliency under stress.

"Resilient people cope with stress better because they use particular skills and abilities in stressful situations" (Mrazek & Mrazek, 1987, p. 76). Mrazek and Mrazek (1987) identified 12 of these skills and abilities, which include "cognitive restructuring of painful events, the ability to reprocess negative events in a way that will make them more acceptable or congruent with one's view" (p. 77). Leading theorists in the area of coping strategies have identified three predominant strengths that mediate human behavior: perseverance, letting go, and psychological growth (Carver & Scheier, 2003). Cassie talked about forgiveness as a means of letting go and getting on with her life. Christy acknowledged acceptance of her situation in the here-and-now understanding that living in the past robbed her of the present. Tripp-Reimer and Friedl (1977) described the idea of living for the moment and in the present as an orientation embedded in Appalachian culture.

Inner Strength

Glicken (2006) posits that resilient people are generally optimistic about the future and have a strong belief in themselves. As a result resilient people have dreams that motivate them to succeed in life. This positive identity helps them to endure or “self right” when in situations they are unable to immediately change.

Inner strength is "a quality that has an effect on one's ability to solve problems or surmount obstacles. It involves a process of self examination, a relationship with others, and can serve as a useful resource" (Dingley, Roux & Bush, 2000, p. 31). The analysis of the concept of inner strength by Dingley, et al. (2000) was based on a review of factors that other theorists and researchers have found to be central. The inner strength studies they reviewed involved participants facing a wide variety of circumstances. They described inner strength as a "fluid process with a fluctuating pattern" (p.32) between quietness and action. The participants in this study exhibited a wealth of perseverance and inner strength that enabled good problem solving skills and fortitude. These women found ways to overcome the difficulties created by poverty, death, divorce, substance abuse and prejudice. Rachel described her “upbringing” as a source of strength and motivation that taught her to believe in herself. Others attributed their relationship to significant others and to God as a means of support and strength. In addition Miriam acknowledged that an attitude of hope and a belief “that it (life) had to be better than this” enabled her to return to school and become an independent woman. Reivich and Shatte (2002) found that realistic optimism appeared to increase resiliency in adolescents. Tabitha could have given up when reading the qualifications for the internship posting to complete her bachelor’s degree and for which she was interested. Thinking as

optimistically as possible within the bounds of reality, she was able to overcome the obstacle of her incarceration to secure the position when she was able to demonstrate that her experience would benefit the agency.

Purpose

Having dealt successfully with their own life difficulties has given these resilient women special abilities to help others. The current research supports Mrazek and Mrazek's (1987) research which identified 12 of these skills and abilities, including "altruism or the ability to gain pleasure from giving to others" (p. 78). Reivich and Shatte (2002) identified the intrapersonal ability of empathy or being able to accurately identify and connect with the emotional states in others as a key factor of resiliency. Positive self identity helps people who are unable to immediately change their situation to stabilize themselves in times of stress with activities that keep them from feeling emotionally trapped (Glicken, 2006).

In general, studies have shown that volunteering has health and psychosocial benefits including improved psychological well-being (Black & Living, 2004). A recent study suggests that another benefit of giving to others is extended longevity. In a sample from the Changing Lives of Older Couples study it was found that longevity was enhanced for persons who provided assistance to others or emotional support to their spouse (Brown et al., 2003). This benefit was realized even when factors such as age, health behaviors, and mental health were controlled (Brown et al., 2003). Previous studies in the context of arthritis and chronic disease found that tutors were motivated by the desire to help similar others and the need to re-establish a purpose in their lives (Barlow, 2000; Barlow et al, 2005).

Research participants were able to take part in activities such as gospel quartets, educational pursuits, helping the rural poor and activating community support to construct a historical tribute as both means to constructively use their experiences and find places of meaning and support. All participants in this study identified experiences of helping others as a means of processing, giving meaning to and overcoming their own events of adversity. Tabitha is the lead speaker at 2-3 Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings weekly sharing her experiences with others who have problems of substance abuse. In addition Tabitha is currently finishing a degree in social services concentrating her focus in working with juvenile offenders with substance abuse issues. Christy uses her musical talents to speak to and offer inspiration to other women who are experiencing the adversities she has endured. Cassie has given considerable attention to building a museum that honors her Appalachian community. Rachel has spent her entire teaching career with rural Appalachian children addressing the issues of poverty and racism. Miriam addresses the needs and issues of Appalachian students who are also first generation students at a major university.

Place

“Belonging is a basic human need (Maslow, 1954) necessary for psychological well-being and self-actualization” (McLaren, Gomez, Bailey & VanDer Horst, 2007, p.90). A sense of belonging is an extension of Maslow’s (1954) concept of belonging and it is what connects individuals with their surrounding people and environment. Overall the present research supports research cited by McLaren, et al. (2007), that establishing and maintaining relatedness, in particular a sense of belonging with other people, objects, environment and society is important for survival, development and

growth. Although there has been little research on sense of belonging in older people the limited available evidence indicates that lower levels of belonging to the community are associated with higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation. McLaren, Gomez, Bailey, and Van Der Horst (2007) suggest that a sense of belonging is a protective factor against depression in relation to suicidal ideation in older adults. All participants in the current study identified the concept of belonging as a necessary means of surviving the adverse events in their lives. Research participants described belonging to faith communities, gospel quartets, extended family units, Alcoholics Anonymous, neighborhoods, and organizations as a means of connection with others in order to deepen their relationships and gain support through difficult times. These extensions of connection were frequently referred to as a “place” that nurtured these women and sustained them. This reference to “place” could refer to their role in the family, the community, the church or a sense of “place” within themselves and ultimately was indicative of a sense of belonging. Cassie suggests that without her “place” in the quartet, without her sense of “place” with her husband and her “place” within the church family she would not have survived the adversity she has experienced and further suggests a “depression she would not have been able to survive.” As discussed in previous sections, research identifies a place in history, family, the shape and context of daily life and the environment as important aspects of Appalachian women’s identity (Engelhardt, 2001; Hayes, 2006; Lyons, 1998).

Theme Three- Spirituality

Faith in a Higher Power

People who are religious understand “their role in the universe, the purpose of life, and develop the courage to endure suffering” (George et al., 2000, p. 110). George and colleagues (2000) call this the “coherence hypothesis” and report that the connection between an individual’s sense of coherence about the meaning of life and his or her personal role in the universe affects health and mental health largely because it buffers the person from stress. Studying the relationship between religious or spiritual involvement and recovery from substance abuse based on the studies of Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs, George et al. (2000) asserts that “a central component of these programs is the belief that one has no personal control over addiction, but that there is a higher power who can help the individual to conduct it” (p. 109). All participants indicated having a spiritual connection to God or a Higher Power. This connection seemed to provide guidance and balance in conducting their lives and offering ways to make meaning. It also seemed to have some bearing on how they choose their career, interactions with others, and personal activities and hobbies. Cassie, Christy, and Rachel specified moral and ethical choices that were based on their spiritual beliefs. Thus, having a personal spiritual connection was related to all of the participants’ ability, in this study, to make meaning, create a purposeful life and perhaps their moral structure. Conversely, life events, such as moving, job changes, marriage, divorce, death and the birth of children influenced the participants’ faith life. Health challenges in their loved ones, friends and within self was another opportunity for making meaning. Connection to a personal God or Higher Power contributed to a valuing of relationships.

Faith Development

Glicken (2007), citing an article in *Pediatrics* ("The Changing American Family," 2003) claimed that religious or spiritual involvement offers important supports for many families and that a growing body of research shows a positive association between religious or spiritual involvement and health and well-being, resulting in lowered risk markers among children for substance abuse and violence. Spirituality may positively affect health and well-being because of the fellowship, support, and social bonds that develop among spirituality affiliated people. For example, Ellison and Levin (1998), using spirituality and religion interchangeably, found that "when compared to their nonreligious peers, people who regularly attend religious services report (1) having larger social networks; (2) having more contact with these social networks; (3) receiving more help from others and (4) being more satisfied with their social support networks" (p. 703). Participants reflected on personal experiences of early childhood faith development and the spiritual relationships with family members and significant others. Each participant had a significant early faith life in their family of origin, which seemed to create the initial spiritual base within. Their early established patterns of attending church and seeing faith carried out in their families' daily lives seemed to be an influential factor in the creation of the strong faith lives these individuals experience today. These early life preferences influenced the ongoing faith development process of growing closer to a personal God or Higher Power, which they described as their major place of support.

Faith Practices

As a result of how participants made meaning of their life experiences, faith practices were identified as an indication of the behaviors and actions that followed each individual's reflection of life topics and interaction with their spiritual connection.

Ingersoll (1998) identifies “experience-ritual-practice” as a dimension of spirituality, where a person is doing something active to enrich his or her spirituality. All participants noted that prayer was a central practice in their life that connected them to God and others. In addition prayer offered an additional benefit of feeling as though they were doing something for others. For example, Cassie found prayer to be the avenue that prompted forgiveness, gave comfort in grief and provided direction for decisions she made.

All the participants talked about their belief in something greater than themselves, a “Spirit”, God, and Higher Being. Christy has a belief that God equips people with gifts to be used. Christy, Cassie, Rachel and Tabitha talked about the gifts they have received from the Spirit that has guided them on their path or been significant for them such as when Cassie was able to say goodbye to her husband after his death. Christy expressed a mystical communion with the Holy Spirit and visions that allowed her to know about people and events that she should not have premonition or knowledge of. Rachel relied on The Holy Bible for direction and guidance. Reading the “Big Book” and attending AA meetings was the practice that allowed Tabitha to maintain her sobriety and relationships. Miriam discovered a spiritual connection to God and others in the awareness of beauty.

According to Wilber (n.d.), spiritual practices may lead a person to a “transformative” spirituality. Christy described relationships similar to the concept of “we-ness where there is recognition of connection with another and the focus is taken off of the individual and the individual is seen in the context of the whole such as Ingersoll (1998) wrote that “connectedness can occur with other people, with God, or that

considered divine, and with elements in the environment” (p. 4). Relationship emerged as a theme in this study with social networks, belonging, and spirituality. Cassie, Christy and Tabitha indicated that relationship was a spiritual element and practice in the forms of spiritual friendships/ conversations.

Conclusions

The themes presented, illustrate the lived experiences of the participants and the various intersections where spirituality and resiliency may intertwined (see Figure 4). For all participants spirituality is connected with all that they do and that which helps to bring meaning to their lives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section the primary research questions will be answered: 1) What role does spirituality play in the process of resiliency; 2) How does a relationship with a higher power enhance a woman’s ability to bounce back from difficult situations; and 3) How do some Appalachian Christian women find meaning and purpose when faced with challenges, problems and crisis and how do they make it through?

What role does spirituality play in the process of resiliency?

The research participants accumulated a variety of dynamics that enhanced their resilience. These dynamics include relationships or social connectedness with others, belonging or “place”, inner strength, and a sense of purpose, and faith or spirituality. Intertwined within these characteristics was the central theme of spirituality which included faith in a Higher Power, faith development, and faith practices.

The research participants varied in their religious beliefs and understanding of spirituality and the ways in which these beliefs/understandings influenced their ability to

overcome events of adversity. For the participants, spirituality is something that is entwined throughout their lives; it is much more than a set of doctrines or rituals. Some described feeling connected with other people as a “spiritual” experience. While defining spirituality, participants spoke of their connection being a place of belonging and support.

All of the participants acknowledged a connection between spirituality and giving of themselves to others. These women, in practicing their faith, often responded in providing support to other persons whom they determined were in need. The “living out” of faith by these women was evidenced by the sharing of life experiences, unconditional acceptance and support of persons who were struggling with problems such as alcohol addiction, unforgiving attitudes, and doing what they could to make the life of someone else a little brighter. This is congruent with behavior in resilient Lutheran women studied by Ramsey and Blieszner (1999), for whom involvement in an organized religious group provided structure and meaning in life. The researchers suggested that through forgiveness and caring relationships the women were able to transcend adversities in their lives. Consequently, spiritual resilience contributed to favorable views of the self that motivated the women to extend themselves to others who experienced adversity (Ramsey & Blieszner, 1999).

How does belief in a higher power enhance a woman’s ability to bounce back from difficult situations?

All participants expressed belief in a Higher Power and stated that they could not have made it through difficult times if they had not had their faith. Four participants stated clearly that “without God’s help I could not have made it through.” This belief in a higher power is consistent with the Harvard Study (Vaillant, 2002) that religion was

viewed by persons as helpful in times of trouble. Similar results were reported in a study by Valentine & Feinauer (1993) who found that a relationship with God or a Higher Power provided participants with the hope of something better in life, of strength in the face of abuse and self worth. Farley (2007) suggests that a relationship with a personal God provides a story of transformation. “A belief that transformation is possible allows for the ability to hope for change” (p. 12). The current study also supports numerous studies that have found positive associations between a belief in a Higher Power and either abstaining from substance use, decrease substance use or cessation of substance use (Avants & Margolin, 2004; Koenig, 2004; Olive, 2004). Wash (2003) suggests that a relationship with God gives individuals from dysfunctional childhoods, a place of belonging and being known. Greene (2002) identifies characteristics of a relationship with God that support healing. These include:

- 1) Giving definition to who we are, 2) Providing understanding of the world and events that occur, 3) Provide a mechanism to transcend events of this life, 4) Give a frame of reference for understanding good and evil, and 5) Providing a mechanism for forgiveness. (p. 47-48)

Participants spoke of a sense of connection when making reference to a personal God, higher power or faith base. Participants indicated the connection with a personal God or faith base generated a positive, optimistic way of relating to other individuals as well as providing the strength to overcome the obstacles in their life.

How do some Appalachian Christian women find meaning and purpose when faced with challenges, problems and crisis and how do they make it through?

The resilient Appalachian women in the present study cited their connection to and involvement in the church community as sustaining and supportive. This finding is also consistent with Greene's (2002) study of Holocaust survivors. She found that religion gave meaning to life and sustained the survivors through the unspeakable horrors to which they were subjected. Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger & Gorsuch (2003) state that, "Simply put, being able to comprehend tragedy – make it meaningful – probably constitutes the core of successful coping and adjustment. For most people, spirituality performs this role quite well, especially in times of personal crisis" (p. 483). Likewise, the women in the present study cited their faith as primary to the will to carry on regardless of how difficult their experiences. The effects of family dysfunction in the early years of development; illness and death of spouse in mid- and later life; health issues, sexual abuse, and other challenges were transcended through relationship with, or reliance on, a higher power and one's relationship with a faith community. Participants turned to their faith communities and spiritual disciplines such as prayer, scripture, and spiritual friendships to answer meaning-of-life questions.

Participants in the study acknowledged the relationships they had formed with others were an integral part of their surviving and thriving. Often these relationships were ones formed within the context of their faith base. In one study of aging among rural-dwelling senior citizens analyses revealed that "women were particularly likely to identify relationships, frame of mind, participating in activities and religion/spirituality as important contributors to successful aging" and resiliency (Stark-Wroblewski, Edelbaum, & Bello, 2008, pp. 363-64). Participants in the current study reported that as they grew older relationships became even more important. In a sample of midlife women studied

by McQuaide (1998), feeling connected to others, positive regard of self, and self-efficacy facilitated resilience and coping. In a compilation of traits from studies of women who experienced the challenge of poverty, teen pregnancy, or sexual victimization, Wright (1998) also noted similar characteristics as contributing to resilient behavior. Similar to the results in Wright's (1998) study the current research participants displayed the ability to solicit the support of others from childhood onward, a capacity to find some benefit or meaning in adversity, and espoused an active faith.

Coupled with social connectedness is the perception of belonging to an entity greater than self. The women in this study described having a "place" referring to a geographical location as well as their role in the family, the community, the church or a sense of "place" within themselves and ultimately were indicative of a sense of belonging. As previously noted, research identifies a place in history, family, the shape and context of daily life and the environment as important aspects of Appalachian women's identity (Engelhardt, 2001; Hayes, 2006; Lyons, 1998). Participants described "place" as feeling a sense of "peace" when being in church, serving in some capacity that helped others, having an identified role in the family, advocating for others in need and following a sense of "call" from God which brought ultimate meaning to their lives. Roux, Dingley, and Bush (2002) posited a "recontextualized model for growing in inner strength" (p. 89). The five constructs in this model are "knowing and searching, nurturing through connection, dwelling in a different place by recreating the spirit within, healing through movement in the present, and connecting with the future by living a new normal" (p.88). Other inner strength attributes noted by these authors include "the characteristics

of spirituality and inner peace, connectedness, self awareness, meaning and purpose" (p. 88).

Spiritual resources such as belonging to a faith community, having a belief in a higher power and practicing spiritual disciplines including prayer, scripture and spiritual conversations with co-believers and ministers have afforded the participants a way of understanding their life experiences supporting Pargament et al, (1990) and others who have suggested that religious resources can function on a cognitive level, in essence, providing a framework of beliefs from which to interpret and make meaning out of stressful events. In addition as Koenig's (2000) study suggests, participants have found that these same resource have functioned as protective factors that have strengthened coping mechanisms used in subsequent adversarial events. Finally, the experiences of these five participants support the conclusion of other studies that show traumatic experiences can serve as a vehicle for growth (Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). Participants in the study were able to use their own traumatic events to help others thereby building self-efficacy. A review of the literature suggests that the most important factors that contribute to this growth through traumatic experiences or resiliency are social support (Tremblay, Hebert, & Piche, 1999; Stark-Wroblewski, Edelbaum, & Bello, 2008), religion/spirituality (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Stark-Wroblewski, Edelbaum, & Bello, 2008), dispositional optimism (Cadell, Regehr, & Hemsworth, 2003), and finding meaning in the stressful event (Frazier, Tashiro, Berman, Steger,&Long, 2004).

Limitations

Qualitative methods have been criticized for their lack of objectivity. Patton (1990) explains how the credibility and trustworthiness of the evaluator is the true issue.

Although this is a limitation I have attempted to maintain the highest standards in my observations.

In this research, a very small sample was used. The logic behind the selection was to select information-rich cases. This type of sampling has its limitations because it does not afford the generalizations one can effect from large, random samples. Nevertheless, the use of purposeful sampling enables one to learn a great deal about a particular issue.

A limitation of this study is that through purposeful sampling only women who were successful and thriving after multiple adversities were selected. Although the study has focused on gathering information that could aid in assessing factors that contribute to resiliency, it is not certain that the information gathered from a successful and thriving woman would be applicable to a woman who has suffered adversities that have contributed to pathology. The study raises the question of causality: Are women more resilient because they are spiritual? Or are women spiritual because they are resilient? This study does not answer these questions.

According to Moustakas (1994), the best way to do a phenomenological study is to carry out the literature review after collecting the data. Due to the nature of this study as a requirement for an educational program, I conducted a literature review prior to gathering data. This was also important in gaining approval from the IRB of Marshall University to conduct this study. It may have been helpful to gain access to the essence of the experience of resiliency and spirituality had the interviews been conducted and data analyzed prior to the literature review.

A final limitation is that the results of this study may have been influenced by my self-sharing. I shared aspects of my own story with the participants, and I freely answered questions posed to me by the participants. In addition, I asked each participant to discuss her understanding of the meaning made of her described experiences. The question of “meaning-making”, in most cases, many years after the experience may produce a biased interpretation as a result of growth and maturity in the intervening years.

Future Directions for Research

This study focused on the role spirituality plays in the process of resiliency for Appalachian Christian women. The participants in this study had earned a high school diploma and at least an associate’s degree in higher education. Further studies may focus on the connection of education and resiliency.

In addition, this study focused on spirituality in women who are resilient. The current study suggests a strong connection between resiliency and spirituality. Further studies might examine similarities and differences in spirituality in both women who are resilient and women who are not resilient. Studying both resilient and non-resilient women would further clarify the role spirituality plays in building resiliency.

Conclusion

The results of the current study suggest that spirituality and resiliency are connected in the lived experiences of these Appalachian women. The participants in this study see themselves as spiritual persons. Life narratives provided evidence that spirituality has played a vital role in the ability of these women to bounce back from

difficult events in their life. Equally the study suggests that an inner sense of connection and relatedness has provided a way of understanding and making sense of their world.

Resilient people are able to cope well with life in the everyday ways even in the midst of feeling deeply dispirited and emotionally labile. They are not superhuman or out of the ordinary. Masten (2001) captures the essence of resiliency in these words:

What began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the every day magic of ordinary normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationship, and in their communities”(p 235).

What differentiates resilient people from others is their ability to get on with their lives in unique and contributory ways that suggest the very best in human behavior.

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Figure 1. Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Marital Status	Education	Race	Church Participation	Work Status	Adversity
Cassie	77	Widowed	Associates	Caucasian	Active	Retired	1)Impoverished Childhood 2)Childhood Sexual Abuse 3)Alcoholic/Abusive Father 4)Family Estrangement 5)Illness and death of spouse
Christy	46	Married (1)	Associates	Caucasian	Active	Medical Assistant	1)Suicide of Father 2)Family Estrangement 3)Abusive Stepfather 4)Relocation 5)Death of Mother 6)Care of siblings
Miriam	55	Married (3)	Masters	Caucasian	Non-Active	University Staff	1)Dysfunctional home 2)Divorce from alcoholic/abusive husbands 3)Sexual Abuse
Rachel	78	Divorced (1)	Masters	African American	Active	Retired	1)Impoverished childhood 2)Racial Discrimination 3)Divorce and single Parenting
Tabitha	44	Divorced (2)	Bachelors	Caucasian	Non-Active	Counseling	1)Impoverished childhood and neglect 2)Alcoholic 3)Child Abuse 4)Prison

Figure 2. Theme One- *Social Support*

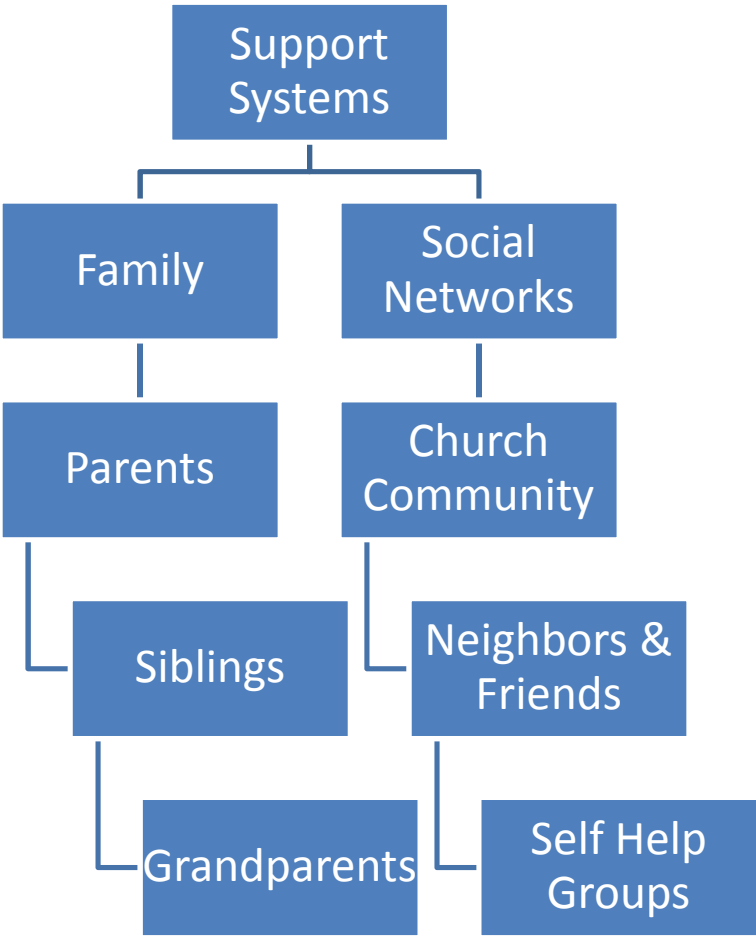


Figure 3. Theme Two- *Self Efficacy*

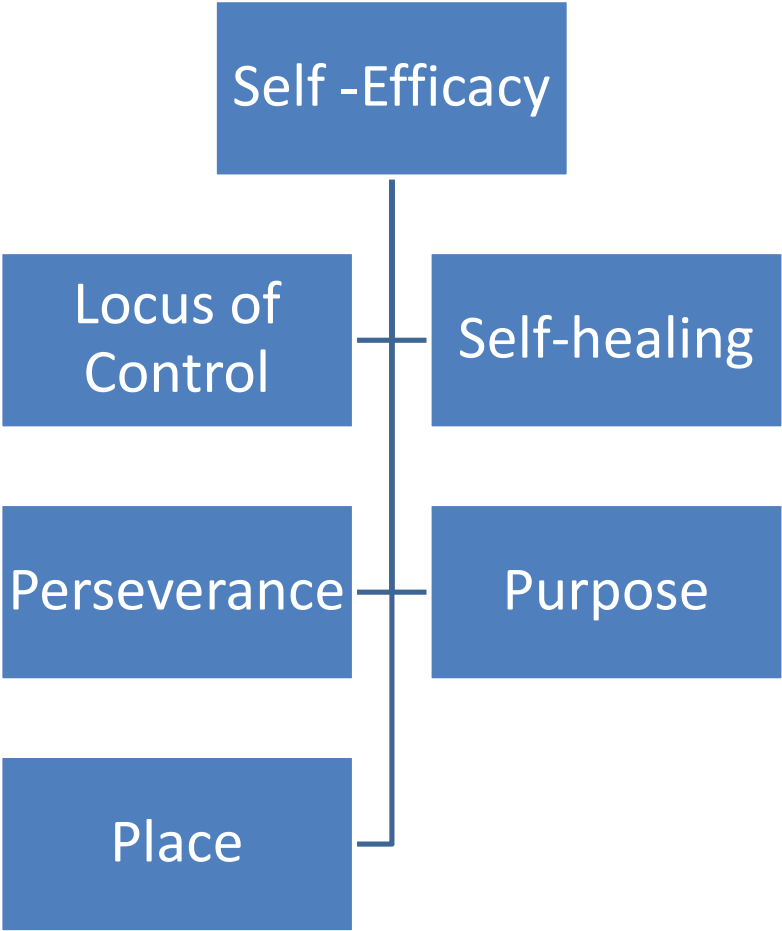
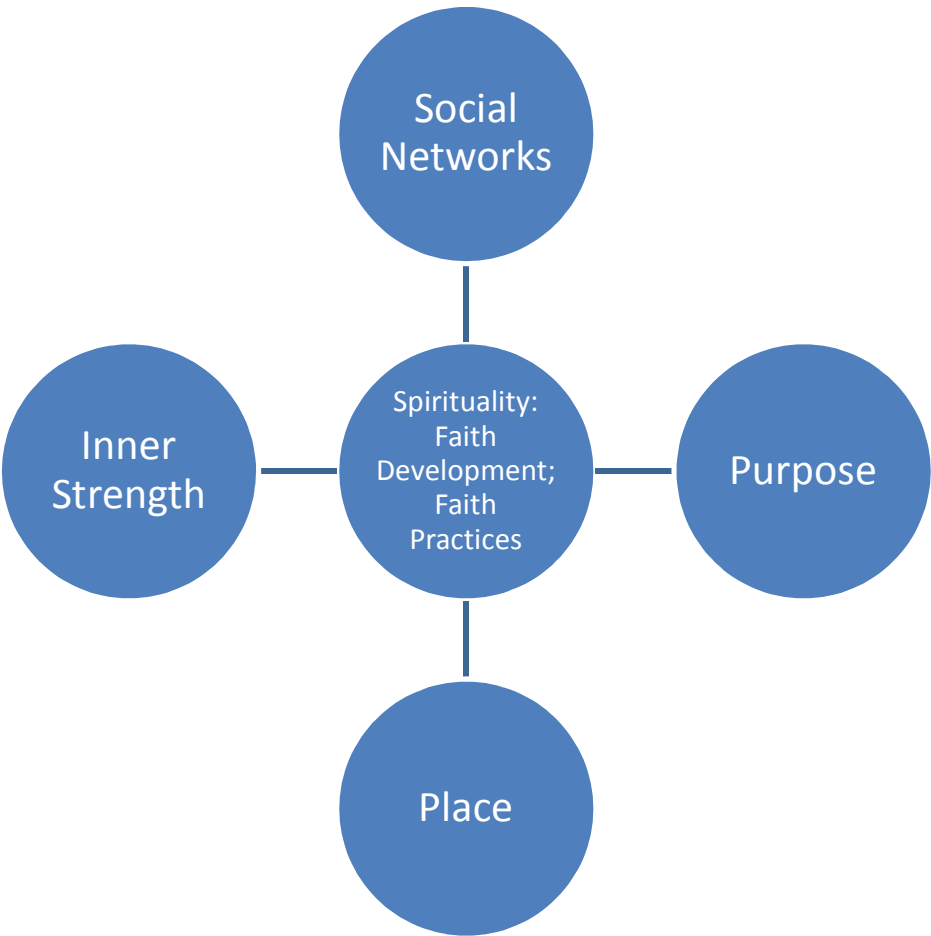


Figure 4. Theme Three- *Spirituality*



Figure 5. A representation of the overlap in spirituality with other areas of resiliency.



APPENDIX A: REQUESTS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Date _____

Thank you for your interest in my dissertation research studying Appalachian women. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and am excited about the possibility of your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate some of the things that we have already discussed and to secure your signature on the Informed Consent form and Confidentiality Form which you will find attached.

The research model I am using is a qualitative model through which I am seeking comprehensive descriptions of your experience. In this way I hope to illuminate or answer my question: How do women face challenges, problems and crises and how do they make it through these experiences? Through your participation as a co-researcher, I hope to understand the essence of the phenomenon as it reveals itself in your experience. You will be asked to recall specific episodes or events in your life in which you experienced difficulty. I am seeking vivid, accurate and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you; your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experience. You may also wish to share personal logs or journals with me or other ways in which you have recorded your experience- for example, in letters, poems, or artwork.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy, and effort. If you have any further questions before signing the release form or if there is a problem with the date and time of our meeting, I can be reached at 304-672-2098.

Sincerely,

Joy Butcher-Winfrey, M.A.

APPENDIX B:

INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Women in Appalachia: A Qualitative Study of Resiliency

Keith Beard, PsyD., Principal Investigator

Introduction

You are invited to be in a research study. Research studies are designed to gain scientific knowledge that may help other people in the future. You may or may not receive any benefit from being part of the study. There may also be risks associated with being part of research studies. In this study you are being asked to tell about difficult situations you have faced in your life. Recalling these events may be painful. You are encouraged to talk openly with the researcher and if at any time you choose not to share an experience or wish an experience not to be included in the study or wish to withdraw from the study, please discuss these issues with your investigator. Your participation is voluntary. Please take your time to make your decision, and ask your research investigator to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to understand how some women in Appalachia create meaning and purpose in their daily living when faced with challenges, problems and crises and how they make it through these difficult experiences. Specifically, the researcher is interested in concrete experiences of resilient Appalachian women so as to

learn more about the resilience of women, not only for the understanding of how women survive crises/adversity but also those factors that build emotional resiliency.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

Five Appalachian women will take part in this study.

What Is Involved In This Research Study?

Semi-structured interviews discussing challenging and difficult experiences in the lives of Appalachian women and how they overcame or survived these experiences.

How Long Will I Be In The Study?

You will be in the study for about 3 months. You can decide to stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the study investigator as soon as possible. The study investigator may stop you from taking part in this study at any time if he/she believes it is in your best interest; if you do not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

What Are The Risks Of The Study?

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study; however because of the nature of talking about difficult experiences in your life you might experience some psychological discomfort. There may also be other side effects that we cannot predict. Additionally, if discomfort is caused by the retelling of painful events in your life, you study investigator will help you find a competent therapist to process this discomfort with you. You should tell the researchers if any of these risks bother or worry you.

Subject's Initials _____

Are There Benefits To Taking Part In The Study?

If you agree to take part in this study, there may or may not be direct benefit to you. We hope the information learned from this study will benefit other people in the future. The benefits of participating in this study may be: your own personal growth, subjective well-being and physical health

What About Confidentiality?

We will do our best to make sure that your personal information is kept confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Federal law says we must keep your study records private. Nevertheless, under unforeseen and rare circumstances, we may be required by law to allow certain agencies to view your records. Those agencies would include the Institutional Review Board of Marshall University (IRB) , Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP). This is to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. If we publish the information we learn from this study, you will not be identified by name or in any other way.

What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Study?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this study. All the study costs, including any supplies and procedures related directly to the study, will be paid for by the study investigator.

Will I Be Paid For Participating?

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

What Are My Rights As A Research Study Participant?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Refusing to participate or leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the investigators first. You will be given opportunity to review the researcher's transcript and analysis to determine if the written analysis accurately conveys your story. You may choose to request that aspects of your story not be included in the final written product of the research. The final document will be written at the researcher's discretion maintaining all confidentiality discussed above and thereby all data and rights thereto, including the copyright are the property of the researcher for any and all copyright terms and extension of the material.

Whom Do I Call If I Have Questions Or Problems?

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the study investigator, Joy Butcher-Winfrey at 304-623-2486 or 304-672-2098. You should also call the investigator if you have a concern or complaint about the research. For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University IRB#2 Chairman Dr. Stephen Cooper or ORI at (304) 696-7320. You may also call this number if you have concerns or complaints about the research or you want to talk to someone other than the research investigator. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Subject's Initials _____

Confidentiality

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a research participant and the researcher. In most situations, the research investigator can only release information about your information to others if you sign a written Authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by the IRB of Marshall University. There are other situations that require only that you provide written, advance consent. Your signature on this Agreement provides consent for those activities, as follows:

- The research investigator may occasionally find it helpful to consult other university professionals on the dissertation committee about the data in this research. During data collection, every effort will be made to avoid revealing the identity of the research participants. The other professionals are also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, the research investigator will not tell you about these consultations unless it is felt that it is important to the research relationship.
- You should be aware that the research investigator needs to share protected information with these supervisors and staff for both clinical and administrative purposes. All dissertation committee members have been given training about protecting your privacy and have agreed not to release any information outside of the bounds of this research experience.
- There are some situations where the research investigator is obligated to take actions, and for which it is necessary to attempt to protect others from harm and some information about the data collected in the process of research may have to be revealed. The following may be situations where this could occur:

-If suspicion that a child is being presently neglected or abused or a child is observed being subjected to conditions that are likely to result in abuse or neglect, and there is opportunity for the child to be abused again, the law requires that the research investigator report to the state Department of Human Services. If it is believed the child has suffered serious physical abuse or sexual abuse or sexual assault, and it is likely to happen again, the law requires reporting these events to the police. Once such a report is filed, the research investigator may be required to provide additional information.

-If the research investigator believes a research participant presents a clear and substantial danger of imminent injury to another, the investigator may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the client.

-If the research investigator believes a research participant presents a clear and substantial danger of imminent injury to him/herself, the researcher may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. If such a situation arises, the researcher will attempt to limit my disclosure to what is necessary.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future.

Subject's Initials _____

Research Participant's Acknowledgment of Receipt of Informed Consent

And

Confidentiality Form

Participant's Name: _____

Address _____ Phone # _____

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and received a copy of the Informed Consent for the research project *Resiliency in Appalachia: A Qualitative Study in Appalachian Christian Women*

Signature _____ Date: _____

(Research Participant):

Signature _____ Date: _____

(Research Investigator)

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and received a copy of the Confidentiality Form for the research project *Resiliency in Appalachia: A Qualitative Study in Appalachian Christian Women*

Signature _____ Date: _____

(Research Participant):

Signature _____ Date: _____

(Research Investigator)

APPENDIX C:INTERVIEW OUTLINE AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Session 1- Introduction to get to know the participants and began building rapport such as: “I will be studying Appalachian women who have experienced difficult situations in their lives. I am curious about how they face difficult times and how they get through or bounce back from these difficult experiences. What resources and means of support do they utilized? I will be talking with five women over the course of three months.” I like to begin by asking you to:

- Tell me about yourself,
- What have been difficult times and experiences in your life?
- What happened? What was that ...like?
- Take me through that event, what happened first, what happened next, what did you feel, think, do?
- What was going on for you then?
- What were your reactions to....?
- How did you manage to get through ...?
- What was it like to have to deal with....?
- What helped you to survive...?
- How do you go about....?

Session 2-3- Follow up and member checks, looking at journals, pictures, documents, etc. Possible observation in natural environment of an event, experience, typical day, etc. As you were telling me about....and talking about some of the experiences that were helpful to you, I thought about spirituality and how some people might term these

spiritual issues. I was wondering if you considered them spiritual issues and how you experience spirituality in the midst of adversity? Discussion of any spiritual issues using the following informal questions based on information given to this point:

- Can you identify spiritual resources from which you gain strength and energy to overcome some of your stresses/losses? Explain.
- Have these resources remained the same throughout your life? Explain.
- How have these resources given your life meaning and/or purpose?
- How have these resources helped you to cope during difficult times as you got older?
- What activities continue to give meaning and/or purpose to your life?
- Do you have family or friends that you depend upon to give you strength for living and energy to overcome some of these stresses/losses? If so, what is it about this relationship that gives you strength or energy?

Session 3-4- Confirmation/member checks.

- What do you think about my interpretations, writing, commonalities found, conclusions, etc?

APPENDIX D:

Portraits of Participants

In this section a portrait of the individual participant's experience of adversity is presented. Excerpts extracted from transcripts of the actual interviews will be used to give voice to the participant's story. The adverse events reported by these women are their own perceptions of their experiences and as such the accuracy is unknown and reported claims are alleged.

Cassie

Cassie is a youthful 77 year-old Appalachian woman who is a retired postal worker and church pianist. Cassie was quite willing to participate in the interview process as evidenced by her energy and quick start-up as she quickly delved into her story. She describes stories about her family, arrangements and habitat that were formed out of poverty and hard times. While her family knew of more progressive ways in which to live they did not have the luxury of infrastructure, education or transportation. Cassie's family has roots in coal mining and war. Cassie is a woman born to adversity and learns not only to survive but to give herself to others with a wisdom that says survive and then do a little bit more. She suggests that "if the fight is there, then have at it"

Cassie grew up in southern West Virginia. She was the first of four children. Her father was a coal miner and she was born in 1931 at the time her family lived in a coal camp. She describes her early years beginning in post depression 1931 as difficult with a very modest family income derived by her father working coal. She describes her mother

scrubbing their clothes with lye soap and a brush and sand. She was 15 months old when her oldest brother was born. “That was the end of my days [as the baby] I guess because there was 4 of us born in 5 ½ years.”

She describes moving frequently as a result of the violence in the coal camps. The minors had to carry guns and knives to work. Her family moved within a southern West Virginia County in 1934 to a place she describes as “the end of the earth.” This new home seemed suggestive of a frontier lifestyle more adaptable to late 18th century existence with a flavor of the West Virginia mine wars in the 20th century. Cassie describes her mother giving birth to her brother without the aide of a doctor. She describes the loneliness and isolation living up in the mountain. She portrays the behaviors of neighboring families’ who exhibit themselves in ways of drunkenness, violence and child abandonment as older children were assigned to watch younger children with little supervision. Cassie describes being left in the watch of her 12 year old uncle at the age of 3 and experiencing sexual assault.

There are things that happened to me there, by an uncle that I didn’t understand, see I was only 3 but I remember that, sexually. Yes, and all I knew was that it hurt, and it haunted me. Anyway, it was cold, and rats, an old house, and I remember my baby brother having croup and mom had to try to doctor him by herself. We were probably a mile and a half back from anybody on the mountain. I’m sure my mother must have known. A child that age don’t... you know? I didn’t know what or why, but I remember going out on the porch, but it was my uncle, he was 12 years

old and I was 3. I don't know what they could've done or what they would've done, you know, I don't know, other than killed somebody. But I didn't even mean to tell you that but there it is. I never told anybody until, um, I think, well I know it was the day 17 years ago that Dad went to the hospital the last time, my brother and I were waiting, we had taken Daddy's papers down and I told him. He just sat and looked at me with tears in his eyes. Of course he had 3 girls of his own. I suppose I had always wondered why somebody didn't recognize, you know? My uncle married and had 3 girls of his own. I've wondered what if somebody had treated them like that, what would he have done?

After moving frequently Cassie's family settled down near her parent's home place in 1941. She describes hard winters, hard work and poverty. 'We did all kinds of farm work with chickens, pigs and cows. It was rough, the first time I ever helped vaccinate a chicken was the messiest, stinkiest...it was some work. Oh I sure do remember that, even the smell of it! Talk about Appalachia, right? But I don't know, nobody ever said that this was rough.'

Cassie tells about wanting to take piano lessons and the price she would pay to learn about something she loves. To fulfill her desire to play music she stayed in the home of her teacher and worked throughout the summer for lessons. She provided child care and housecleaning services for a large family. While living with this family she was sexually assaulted by another man who was working for the family. When she returned home shortly after the assault she told her mother however her mother did not believe

her. She describes the ache of not being believed as she stated: “It’s a double hurt, if your mother doesn’t believe you, no wonder I never told anybody. She said you want to take lessons, get back over there and take them. I didn’t forgive my mother until she was operated on for an aneurism, I prayed to God that if He’d let her live, I’d forgive her and I didn’t realize I held it against her until I had to get my act cleaned up for God to ask him to do that, and He did.”

Cassie began staying with other people, helping out with the elderly, taking care of children and earning extra money. Staying away from home with other families was not her choice but the mandate of her father. She describes the hurt, the loneliness, the loss of control and sometimes the constant fear she felt living in places other than her home and with her family. “I don’t know if this was common for families to do but, I have never known of anybody else doing it around here. I don’t mean to be pessimistic or down beat about it, I’m just telling you how I feel about it. I wanted to stay with my family...because of that I didn’t know where I belonged. You know, I never learned to be at home with my family, and I’ve missed out on a lot of things because I was staying somewhere else.”

The fear and constant wariness was also in Cassie’s home. Cassie’s father abused alcohol and often became violent and abusive with his family. “I don’t why he was doing it, chasing me around the table, and he stumbled into it and there was a sharp corner and it hit him in the groin and mother standing there with a knife, I don’t know what he was gonna do but it never happened any more and he was hateful, drinking you know we never went hungry, she kept us fed and clothed, and he provided the money.” She

experienced a lifestyle where the men in the family had the control and the women were expected to be submissive. "...Dad made the remark to Mother about her not getting a job, I believe she told me it was control. Still Mother told me not to get any ideas that I was gonna be the boss in my marriage, I didn't think I was the boss.

As she grew older Cassie experienced difficulties that caused great loneliness and were often out of her control. Her parents arranged for her to move to another part of the state to attend WV Business College. However, once again she went against her will and continued to be put upon to care for others. "I didn't think I had a choice. I'd come home from there, ride a bus and get car sick. Anyway, I'd get home, stay a couple days and go back and be so homesick for a week that I was sick."

Cassie describes the lean early years of her marriage and the obstacles that were dealt with including the lack of support from her parents and her husband's mother. In addition the man she married was a quadriplegic who had been injured in a mining accident and also a veteran. They lived on his meager pension from the military until Cassie went to work at the local post office. Cassie experienced many set-back in her job. Working for the government in the late 50's and early 60's, she experienced frequent decreases in pay without notice and with expectations to work the same hours and perform the same job.

After being married for seven years, Cassie and Edward were faced with a difficult decision that would affect the rest of their lives. After the death of a cousin which left four children alone with a father who was unable to care for them, once again it was put upon Cassie to care for them. Cassie was 30 years old, childless and the

breadwinner for her family. Cassie and her husband initially decided to adopt all four children. This decision was made at the risk of her job. Eventually the youngest of the children was adopted. This little boy had many developmental delays and his medical condition forced Cassie to periodically go back to work as she did not have health insurance. In addition her adopted son's biological father would reappear from time to time threatening the family with their life. Bobby was a difficult child to raise as Cassie describes. "We tried to help him to read and stuff but he would just bow up and not do anything. You could tell if it was a bad day or not and most of the time it has been a bad day. I wasn't very patient, I tried to help him and it seemed to me that he tried to force me to do something, as if he may have wanted me to prove that I cared about him."

For Cassie, life has been a series of losses culminating in the most painful loss, the death of her husband in 1992. Cassie became his caregiver as he slowly became incapable of mobility for himself. She describes the heartache watching him slowly deteriorate, not being able to move and as a result getting bedsores that became infected. Within 21 months of Edward's death, Cassie lost 7 family members including her mother and father. "Was it difficult? If you call it difficult not going to the hospital after he had a stroke, he was not going to go back after he went back and had surgery in '88. The deterioration of tissue, no circulation, watching him suffer....It was hard. Makes you ask the question why? It was just lose, lose, lose, lose. I used to, well I still do, of course I went to church, I'd go but I would see his wheelchair in my mind sitting in places throughout the church."

The most important ingredients in coping with these losses and in the healing that followed and which speaks to her resilient nature have been her faith in God, answered prayer, finding a place where she belonged, love of family and friends, and music. She currently directs her energies outward as a way of lessening her pain. She describes her philosophy of life: “So you live through the times of other people. The trials and later on you realized that’s what that was, that’s what is going on. You learn to accept a lot of things; you don’t get bent out of shape. I live by this poem that I memorized as a child: “I know not when, I know not of the blessing, I know that it cometh sooner or later, Therefore we need to pray indeed.”

Cassie describes a night when she felt her husband’s presence and believed that God had answered her prayer.

I went to church up there that night and played the piano. Still in my own little world so when I come home that night, Bobby and Edward had gotten me an opal ring for my birthday in 1981 and I was gonna put it in the box and the drawer was open and I dropped it down in there. I thought I’ve got to find that ring; I won’t rest until I do. I took the flashlight, pulled the drawer out. There was a box of shells, I laid it all up there, I could see the ring and I laid it up there and then I started to put the stuff back in. I got down here and there was a little piece of paper like this green thing and I looked at it and I thought ‘what is that?’ I’ve never seen that before. I looked closer and it said ‘look who’s here’ and I opened it up and there was a picture of Edward in 1932, a school picture and 2 other

pictures that I had never seen before. He's standing up before he was crippled, had his arm around his aunt Mary and another picture eating an apple and a dog leaning against him and I never seen him let a dog touch him. Thank you God, you've answered my prayer, look who's here he said!. I think that clenched it with me and God. I don't know why I hadn't seen the picture before. After being married for 37 ½ years it was for a reason. So we were supposed to sing the next night and my quartet wanted me to play How Great thou Art because they thought it sounded better with music. When I got up to go to the piano, I didn't go to the piano, I felt like I needed to go to the altar. I felt people laying their hands on me and it was my quartet. When I got up from the altar the altar was full of people...then I could play How Great thou Art! The quartet has been an important part of my healing. It gave me a reason to get up, clean up and go and be a part. There were times I felt like I couldn't, but I made myself go. Grief is a draining thing; your stamina is shot, but God, family and friends that love me. God through friends and family, my family is very valuable and precious to me. I've got extended family, that's the way I feel about it.

Cassie spends a great deal of her time developing and coordinating the events of the local museum working on the genealogy of the community. Coping at a very early age with unpleasant aspects of life has helped Cassie to cope with her losses and move forward. She describes herself as always having been a hard worker and she believes that

her ability to work for others is helping her now. Perhaps this statement portrays her viewpoint of living: “And there is no end to it, as long as there is life there is genealogy, that table is full, that’s full...”

Christy

Christy is a 46 year- old Appalachian woman whose life begins in eastern Virginia but has ancestral roots in southern West Virginia. She describes her early life at home as being extremely constricted. Christy’s father’s mental health condition shares a collective family history with drunkenness and violence. Before Christy was 12 years old her father committed suicide which precipitated a reestablished life with an abusive stepfather and then relocation in North Carolina. Her mother’s second marriage was abusive and violent to all concerned and required a wary posture and the necessity to hide. Later after the death of her mother she would return to her roots in West Virginia alone to raise her younger brother. She subscribes that her relationship with a personal God is a mainstay in her life which enables her to carry on.

Christy’s life began in turmoil. Her father was married to her mother’s sister and living in Virginia. Christy’s mother went to stay with her sister and brother-in-law to study nursing. Her mother and father fell in love with each other. Her father divorced her aunt and married her mother. This became the seed of discord within her mother’s family. Christy’s parents had four children together before they returned to live in West Virginia as Christy was entering the first grade. Her father was very restrictive with his family and shared a history of alcohol abuse with his family of origin. Christy does not remember her father as an affectionate man.

We grew up being afraid of uncles because all of them were alcoholics to kill their pain. My father was not close, I don't ever remember my father telling me he loved me, but we knew it, he taught us right from wrong.

Mom made up for everything that he didn't do, because she loved everybody, but I could tell growing up every time my father was real strict, and I was really skinny when I was little, and I remember them making me eat. My father used to make me eat everything on my plate because they thought I was not eating properly. I mean we had all kinds of things, all the vegetables, everything we think now that we are supposed to be eating, we always had it. That was tough, Cod Liver Oil, yuck. I remembered after my dad died, our house was full of life, almost too much life. I feel bad that, well, I remember our first Thanksgiving after dad died in June, Mom had made each one of us a Cornish hen. We were giggling and laughing, and every time we giggled or laughed at the kitchen table Dad would always get upset. I remember that I felt like I could breathe.

Extended family support was often difficult as a result of her parent's marriage. Christy's father was not close to his family as a result of the abusive family system in which he was raised. After returning to West Virginia, Christy describes a period when her life began to seem normal and calm. Her family was working on renovating their house together. She describes their life as normal, like other kids, except that her father limited their contact with others and became very protective of them. She portrays her father as a man who wanted to provide for his family and give his family a sense of

security by attending church and living by strict rules and order. However, growing up in this environment was oppressive and controlling.

Christy frequently found herself in the position of discovering and preventing her father in 8 attempts to commit suicide. Finally, when she was 11, he succeeded. She describes this time in her life as one of the most difficult and confusing periods and yet only the beginning of the ongoing adversity she experiences.

My father tried to commit suicide 8 times. And every time I was the one to prevent it. The first time, I was 11, I wanna say May, because he died June 12th. We always ate together, Mom sent me out to get Dad to come in to eat. I walked down from our house to the barn, and here's the loft, and here comes this rope floppin down, and I stuck my head up and said 'watcha doin' Dad?' I don't know if he was testing the rope to see where it was gonna go down to where he was gonna tie it. Never thought of it, I was so naïve. That's when I would wake up and hear my mom crying, no fussin' or fightin', never any fighting, no cussing or noises, there was always an underlying current that there was something wrong at our house. Mom had this one shirt with a hole in the back and Dad would come up and kiss mom there. One night, this was like 3 in the morning and he had Stan, and Stan was 4, all of us had gotten up but Dad was going to go drive off the bridge in Caldwell and he told all of us.

The last time, it was morning. Chris was running the rotor-tiller, Dixon was shooting the 22, they always had target practice, target practice

was always a big thing at our house, Mom was sitting out at the granary with Stan in a playpen beside her and I was inside coloring. I loved to color. I was at the kitchen table, I had already done my chores and it was around 11 or 12. Dad came into the kitchen and said that I needed to go water the chicks. I said 'Dad I've already done that', he said 'well go do it again.' And I was always taught that if Dad told you once you don't have to be told again or he'd whip ya, that's how it was at our house. So I went and did it, I didn't think twice about it and then Mom told me to come in and get her cigarettes off the kitchen table. Just touching the back door, anytime I have been around anything evil it takes my breath. I knew it as soon as my hand reached the knob. I went in and said 'Dad?', and I already knew it, and I just went looking for him, I went in and I saw blood and his whole face was blown off. The burnt hole (Christy indicates her neck)...meat everywhere. I remember yelling for Mom and Mom just lost it, and my oldest brother came in and I remember my twin coming in, and I wouldn't let my little brother come in. We kept him outside and then after a while a neighbor came and picked up my two youngest brothers and myself and took us to her house. She tried to feed us hotdogs with ketchup and I couldn't do it....but I'll never forget...and I remember the funeral. I wasn't even crying, I was counting the boards, just trying to concentrate and counting the boards. I felt bad because I didn't feel bad.

Christy portrays this time in her life with conflicting feelings. While there seemed to be some relief of the depressive atmosphere Christy spent her early years it was accompanied by guilt as she states, “for the first time in my life I felt like I could breathe.” The peace and calm however, soon turned into fear, hiding and separation from her family. Christy’s mother became reacquainted with her childhood sweetheart and was married shortly after. Christy states that “the first time I met him, I knew it I had that feeling again, I will never forget that feeling of evil. I told mom that he’s wrong, there’s something wrong, I don’t like him at all.” They built a new home on their farm that Christy describes as her mother’s dream home that quickly became her greatest nightmare. Christy’s stepfather was abusive to his wife and as a result Christy and her twin brother were forced to live with their grandparents.

I proved right because he ended up beating her. Because it ended up that she and Stan ended up down there alone, and he beat her, and she had cuts here from where he broke her glasses, and her whole boob was totally black, the boob she got cancer in, it was black from where he hit her. Stan had seen all of this. That is what’s amazing he came out of all of this fairly OK. Mom actually sent us to our grandparents because he said he would kill us if he saw us at the house.

After a year of being separated from her mother and living with her twin brother and grandparents Christy moved to North Carolina to escape the abusive step-father and the family was once again reunited. While this came with the promise of the relief of separation and abuse, it meant a new lifestyle, leaving friends behind and establishing a new identity. Christy states “I was sad for what I’m leaving, but I didn’t have that black

cloud over me anymore. I finally got to be who I wanted to be and not who everybody thought I was because of my history.” In North Carolina, Christy found people to be friendly and welcoming. Both she and her twin brother went to work to afford the extracurricular activities in school. Christy describes the “black cloud” that continued to hang around at least for her mother. Even though her mother had divorced her husband issued a warrant against him for protection the fears continued to hover. “...every time Mom saw a black Chevrolet truck she would get scared to death because for one instance she would think he was coming back to seek her down because he was ticked because she left and divorced him.”

Christy and her family had yet to experience another tragedy for their family. Christy describes a more settled and happy life after settling down in the North Carolina community. Christy finished high school and began college. She met and dated a young man from Iran in the early 1980’s and during the Iran crisis. She describes her self as a champion of underdogs. Then the difficult news came that her mother had breast cancer and was given 3 months to live. Christy shared the responsibility of her mother’s care with her aunt and her mother died within 9 months. She describes this time as extremely laden with emotion yet as she states, “...I learned more from mom that month and a half because I was listening.” Before Christy’s mother died she asked Christy to promise that she would take care of her 14 year old brother.

Christy struggled with her mother’s death and found that the promise she had made to her mother was the only thing that kept her “sane.” While her aunt and brothers supported her, she had to make many sacrifices and difficult decisions so as to honor her

mother's request and raise her little brother, even to the point of relocating once again and returning to West Virginia, a place that held bittersweet memories for her.

Christy returned to West Virginia initially to take care of unfinished business with her mother's estate. The house that had been built on her father's land had not sold in the 7 years they had lived in North Carolina. When she returned to West Virginia she became reacquainted with her high school boyfriend. He convinced her to stay using the argument that she had a perfect house and it was a better place to raise her brother who was heavily involved in drugs. Christy agreed and brought her brother to live once again in West Virginia. The farm was more than 2 miles off the main road and the house had not been well maintained. Christy describes this time as physically exhausting and emotional draining. She talks about the first winter, "I remember how cold it was that first winter, it was horrible. My little brother and I would build a fire in the kitchen and stand close to it. We'd get as hot as we could stand it and then we'd run to our beds to go to sleep." Christy soon found hope and assistance from her neighbors and her future husband's family. Christy married her high school boyfriend and together they had two children while raising her younger brother. They sold the farm house and built a house close to his parents. Yet Christy continued to struggle with the events of her life and the next eight years would become a time of personal growth, peace making and purpose.

Today Christy has found meaning and purpose in her life. She spends her time when not with her family singing in a gospel group as well as performing in solo concerts. Christy gives back to her community as she provides leadership in her church and other community organizations. She describes her purpose in life to be a witness to

others regarding her experiences in life and attests to her reality and relationship with God. Perhaps the meaning she has created out the adversity is best described in her words:

Jesus is the rock that will never crumble. Everything else in life changes but Jesus will never change, Daddy will leave, Momma will leave, everybody leaves but Jesus never will. I want my children to know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you can walk the road that your journey is on no matter what. I make them look on the bright side of things and that's what you gotta do in life. I keep waiting on God to do everything, and me not do nothing and that is when I get into trouble. There is nothing like being in that feeling being exactly at that right place where God exactly wants you to be." Isaiah 61 -to break free the captives . Because there are so many people...My job is to help other people see, don't forget who you are, that's why when you said you were gonna do this interview I said 'oh thank you God' I need somebody to remind me who I am again.

Miriam

Miriam is a 55 year old Appalachian woman born and raised in southeastern Ohio. Her story reveals experiences of domestic violence as a result of alcohol abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Both of Miriam's husbands exhibited behavior that mirrored that of her father. She speaks about the events and people of her experience

throughout this depiction. She has now found a compatible relationship, earned a master's degree and has completed a number of doctoral hours while recovering from a lifetime of abuse. She reflects on her children and her religious life and believes her church and faith has been invaluable. Her strength can be summed up in her statement, "you can only go forward, you can't go to the past."

Miriam is the second of four daughters. At first Miriam does not associate her father's alcoholic behavior as influencing subsequent decisions she made as a young woman of 18. Her father encouraged Miriam and her sisters to take advantage of school and other opportunities that were offered for education and a career. While her father would have paid for his daughter's education, Miriam and her oldest two sisters left home at 18 to become married. Her youngest sister was the only sibling that came to Ohio University following high school. "Even though I said there wasn't any trauma in my house as I was growing up, in retrospect I can see I got married at 18 to get out of the house. My father was an alcoholic, he was not abusive but it took up a lot of our time. When there was an incident at home we would pack up and go to my grandma's two blocks away. He was a good father but he could not keep away from the alcohol. My mom and dad were divorced the year my son, Dale was born, thirty-three years ago. Dad kept the house and bought her another one. He still loved my mom, not real sure how she felt about him. She was like me, tired to the drinking and the abuse."

Miriam like many Appalachian girls saw marriage as a way out of unhealthy situations only to realize they had eventually landed in similar situations they had attempted to leave. Miriam met her husband at the age of 18 and was married within a

few months. Before their first anniversary Miriam gave birth to her oldest son. “I was 18 he was 19, very understanding...ten months after we were married I had my oldest son and by the time Ned was three we were divorced. He wanted to be married but he also wanted girlfriends and he liked to drink. Again I didn’t think he was an alcoholic but he liked to drink, but I guess I was traumatized by my dad’s drinking. He left me in a trailer all alone with our son, sometimes for several days without transportation.”

Miriam surmised that as a result of this isolation she became very vulnerable and as such made a similar decision when given attention by another man who offered the words that she needed to hear. As a result she once again used marriage to escape loneliness, pain and isolation.

I was deeply hurt by my first husband’s infidelity... that didn’t make right what I did, but later I was married to this man. He said he wanted everything my first husband had, a home and children, like I said he told me everything I wanted to hear. My first husband neglected me to a point, but not as much as my second. He assured me he was gonna take care of me and Ned, and we’d have more children, the honeymoon didn’t last any longer than the going together as far as that goes. I don’t know what was going through my head back then that I gave into that. Up until the point I met my second husband I was a pretty strong person, he had beaten everything out of me, I was very unsure of myself, I knew I was fat and ugly. However he was my children’s dad and I wanted them to have that. We were together until they graduated. He and I was married for twenty-

three years, had two children, a boy and a girl and it was twenty-three years of pure hell except for my children, they were the good part.

Once again Miriam choose a man even more like her father than her first husband. Her second husband abused alcohol that led to his abuse of Miriam. The relationship became so abusive that Miriam reports losing sight of who she was which nourished an attitude of helplessness and hopelessness. After bravely searching for a job and taking classes toward a degree, Miriam was able to extricate herself from the abusive and violent marriage.

He was an alcoholic; he was eventually diagnosed as bipolar, which my father was as well. My husband wouldn't take the medicine but he was diagnosed and the alcohol on top of it. He was very abusive when he drank, at the time I probably outweighed him 40-50 pounds and yet he could throw me across the room really quickly and easily. He was very strong. I've had black eyes, torn clothes, bruises from here to there, and broken glasses. He didn't cut my hair like my sister's husband did to her, but he pulled it. After I began taking classes at Ohio University and after taking a class here on intimate abuse, I learned there are different types of abuse on top of physical; I found I had been morally, financially, and sexually abused by my second husband. The bottom line was he told me I was fat and ugly and if I left him I'd be alone and nobody else would want me. He told me I'd be a lonely bitter old woman. He was very jealous of my time with anybody, that was the worst part of the twenty-three years,

was the jealousy, he accused me of sleeping with all seven of his brothers and one is gay. My husband had problems. He was jealous of the time I spent with the children. I didn't have any friends. My second husband wouldn't allow it. I had no friends for close to twenty years save but my sister. It seemed like it was an ongoing battle for the first sixteen years. I felt my husband was very abusive to my oldest son and I am very ashamed that I was too weak to get out of that situation with my son. Interestingly enough Ned adores his dad that raised him, been with him since he was three. I also had two other children. What finally put the nicks in our marriage before we got the divorce, he had an affair with a young friend from church and she was four years older than Ned. We were real good friends with her and her husband. My husband abused that friendship, he and the man became very good friends, they fished together, hunted together. He had gone to rehab and he was sober at the time. They were very godly people and they would not have associated with him if he was like that at the time. That was the only affair that I knew about, I was not jealous until that happened and then when it did it was downhill.

After her husband had the affair, Miriam describes herself as "a bitch for the next eight years." It was when she could no longer, as she states "stand myself" that she began making changes. She began to realize that her Appalachian culture had taught her to be submissive to her husband. She describes the place of the woman that she was taught: as the caretaker, stay at home person who "just makes the home nice for the

family, make sure there's something to eat, it's clean." She began to understand that her husband was exerting control over her by not letting her go to work. In his jealousy and need for control he would call her 15-20 times per day. If she wasn't able to answer the phone he would become very angry and abusive. He would even check the mileage on the car and calculate where she had said she went daily and if it didn't add up according to his calculations she would be beaten. Miriam accepted this behavior as the norm as it was the same for many of her female family members.

It was hard for me and it was difficult, I thought it out, what really brought our marriage to an end, he was when he was out drinking there at the end and I hoped he had a wreck and killed himself, and put me out of my misery is what I was thinking. I was also fearful he would wreck and kill somebody else. I didn't need that in my life. I chose not to live with somebody who was living such a dangerous life. I guess that's when I started working towards getting out. Before long basically he went his way and I went my way, went back to school in my late 30's and I went to school here [Ohio University]. I wanted to get my bachelor's after I got my associates. If he knew I had an exam the next day and he would want to go out. So I gave up the idea of going to school. Sometimes he'd wait till I'd come home from work and sometimes he'd leave before I got there and then he'd go out and party. Then I worked here [Ohio University], he wasn't happy with it because it was liberal. I was gonna become independent and leave him, I really thought I loved the man. I had a

counselor tell me I was addicted to him like he was alcohol and I looked at that and said what is there in this man to love. He always ignores the children. When Dale was a year old I was so starved for his [husband] attention I tried a drastic measure to get his attention. I slit my wrist and he wouldn't even take me to the hospital and I had to drive myself and lie that I busted through a window. That tore me up big time, I wasn't suicidal but I was just trying to get his attention.

Miriam's daughter following in her mother's footsteps became pregnant at 18. Miriam describes the treatment her daughter received from her father. "He called her every name in the book. He always accused Mindy of being a slut. This is generational because his brothers have one sister and they always said she was a slut. His brothers would call her 'fodog'. This is stuff they learned from their dad [family of origin] His dad actually locked his mom out of the house because she went to play softball with their daughter. He thought she was screwing around at the ball field. That's what I mean by it being generational. He's seen this, he grew up with this, his mother would say run down to your grandpa's get out of here for a while like my sisters and me when my dad was drinking. I should've kicked him out."

Becoming apart of the work force, expanding her cognitive abilities, and experiencing relationships with other women, Miriam discovered that she had been abused. She discovered that she had control of her own destiny and if she was going to survive she would have to make her own way. Without support systems in place Miriam struggled to leave her husband and start a new life.

After taking that class on intimate abuse, I thought how can you be sexually abused by your husband. I will describe it to you perfectly, we were married, when I was 9 months pregnant for Dale, we had been having and continued to have sex at least 3 times a day at his demand. When we went to bed the night before Dale was born we had sex. I woke up and went into labor for Dale and then the next day when I got home from the hospital he forced me to have sex. When he got a good job it was decreased to twice a day because he was working, he wasn't there. His drive for sex never decreased until almost the last month we were together and that was my fault of course, I didn't turn him on. It was hell. I had a friend who had been married a year when I had been married 6 months, she was 'ga-ga' and had a great sex life. I said I could take it or leave it – it became a chore, a demand, there was nothing loving about it. I was sexually abused for over 20 years by my husband. I hope to God my boys aren't like that. I hope my daughter doesn't have to put up with that. I think she is stronger than I was and she wouldn't put up with that. I was scared of him at times.

Miriam reports that faith in God, prayer, and a healthy relationship has encouraged her to grow experiencing a healthy spirit in spite of experiencing physical health issues. Returning to education that broadened her world view opened up new doors of possibility and independence. Meeting other women who had similar struggles encouraged her to continue her education in spite of the obstacles of age and health.

Miriam attributes much of her ability to make the needed changes in her to her job.

Miriam describes two role models she found in the women she began working with when she entered the work force. Both of them coincidentally finished their bachelors, got their masters and doctorate degrees and had families. She describes learning from the people she encountered in the work place. She discovered that all men were not like her previous husbands. She began to understand from both her co-workers and professors that she and her sisters had married abusive alcoholic men as this were her experience as a result of the culture in which she grew up.

What got me through? My faith in God! It's the same as learning to swim; I don't remember not believing in God. I do remember vaguely we went to church as a family, when Dad dropped out Mom took all four of us and I just clicked in the environment. My faith has got me through my whole life. I don't know what I would've done without it. I believe that God will provide, but I also believe like some people say the Lord helps those who help themselves. I feel I have to do everything I can to help myself. He's always there, even being sick I don't question why my health problems are happening to me, I know he's not doing it, he's not making me sick, I know that. I think my faith grows as I grow. My prayer definitely has been a source of help. I know he's always available, but just life in general. I didn't see a lot of this before I met third husband. Now I see what God's given us. Since I've met Hank I've seen trees and flowers birds and flowers that I didn't know existed, my life was so tied up in pain

and crisis all the time I didn't see what God had laid out before me and now I can appreciate it. I do think He had a hand in Hank and me, I mean what are the odds. While we do not attend church, my faith in God grows daily and is a source of strength and assurance of love I have not often received from the people in my life.

Miriam compiled a plan of study for her first degree, a B.S.S. in Cultural and Gender Studies and Public Administration. After earning this degree she continued in her studies and acquired a master's degree in higher education. She is currently taking doctoral level classes and is considering quitting school, enjoying her family, her job and living out the rest of her life. The role that education has played in her life is evident as she states, "I enjoy learning so much it's gonna bother me, I know I can continue to learn but I am not real disciplined and need the structure. I know there are things I have to study. On my own I'm not sure I would do that at this point. I am afraid I'd sit around and not take advantage of opportunities that come along. But part of what I have learned from all my experiences is when to pause. I am tired, I've been in classes for 7 years, I'd like to kick back and enjoy Hank. I have come to understand more strongly each day, 'you can only go forward, you can't go to the past.'"

Rachel

Rachel is a 78 year old Appalachian woman of African American descent who has spent her entire life in West Virginia with a brief 3 year period living in Philadelphia. She states that she lives in "West Virginia at the southern base of the eastern panhandle by choice." Rachael is acquainted with living in a diverse blend of ethnic diversity.

Prevalent in Rachael's story is the positive influence of her parents. Rachael describes her father as a strong man who emphasized education and compares him to the civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King. Very significant in her story is the early admonishment of her father who often said to his family, "...if you want something bad enough you are gonna have to go after it." From her mother comes the model of obedient faith. She praises and respects her family and Rachael translates her parent's beliefs into her own life's journey overcoming the hurdles of racial prejudice and segregation, of broken marital relationships, and of single parenting. Overcoming the tremendous obstacles of race, gender and economic hardship she received higher education degrees at West Virginia University and Marshall University. Through her educational pursuits and life experience she traverses the local and geographic restraints as she makes a significant contribution to the early Headstart program and public school teaching positions.

Rachael recognizes the poverty of people who have meager resources as well as the absence of resiliency and feels compelled to take up their struggle. She acknowledges the opposition within the larger community and yet was able to recognize the presence of others along her journey who shared her view on human equality. She portrays a meager socio economic lifestyle. "We were poor but didn't know we were poor, my mom made all of our clothes, my father raised cows and chickens and that's how he fed his family, there were 12 of us, 6 boys and 6 girls. I can't remember ever going without something to eat or clothes to wear. Times were hard, I could tell that because we knew we didn't have the clothes the other kids wore but what we had we were satisfied with." Her father believed in protecting his family from problems which resulted in moving several times

to different coal mining camps. She describes these coal camps as diverse and in her early childhood years she did not understand the concept of segregation. It was not until she entered the public school system that she began to face the racist attitudes and behaviors of her neighbors.

We talk about this coal mining camp and my mom was the seamstress and she sewed for everybody in this neighborhood and she served as a midwife to the women there. She was stinky and of quiet nature. My father was the type of person that intended for you to learn, I don't care what you were into he was the type to say you're gonna get your education. My father, I always liken him to Dr. Martin Luther King and when I talk about my family that is a subject I love to talk about. My mom was from southern part of West Virginia but my dad was from Virginia and he went as far as 6th grade but he didn't want that to happen to his kids. He taught himself with books and he could hold a conversation with anybody. At night the scene around our house was we studied, if you went to school you brought your books home. We didn't have electricity we had kerosene lamps and that's what we studied by. He instilled in us the study habit, and if you wanted something you had to go for it. He told us in the first place you don't get anywhere without an education and he said you have it doubly hard because you are black. I didn't really understand that until I went to school yet I liked the black community. I went to a 2 room school and we

had white friends but it didn't matter to me that they went to a different school.

It is a testament to her integrity and the strength instilled in her at an early age that she gracefully speaks about being black and growing up in a white culture. She tells about having a two hour ride back and forth from her home to her high school in another county as she was not allowed to attend the white schools. She philosophically describes the discrimination she experienced as a young black female.

I don't think the white kids understood any better than I did. The other kids, Polish, Japanese and all went to the white school. When I was growing up in my hometown, segregation became real to me when we were not allowed to sit in the drugstores with a fountain. This was probably 1938 or 40 because that's when I really began to realize things were different. I noticed that there was a movie theater here we weren't allowed to go there and then when we were allowed to go, there was a restricted area for us to sit. Father said you won't be going if its restricted, but he softened up and let us go. A lot of the men tried to make things easier but it was nothing to walk down the street and have a name yelled at you and this is why my father tried to keep his children away from town. We were hurt several times because of that, because of the name calling. It was nothing; it was just like everyday life they would call you names. My mother was the type I'd come to town with her and she would just ignore them. Daddy told us how to be strong and how to fight it. He

always told us you are just as good as they are if not better and he built a very strong confidence in his kids, and that's why, I bounce back because that was built into me as a young woman. My mother would say you don't know what you're going to have to go through before you leave this earth so you better get strong to face it. She always had a positive for us. My white friends didn't understand the name calling as the way others had been taught from babies. My white friends didn't understand that we couldn't go into the restaurants with them but we could be on the ball field and play there.

Rachel's brothers and sister worked to support the family income. Before the age of 13 she went to work for a woman who wanted her to be a companion and was able to purchase her school materials. Rachel states "I don't remember not working. It was really rough, life never had been that easy, and if I wanted something I knew I was gonna have to work hard." Her brothers went into the army and helped her mother by sending her their paychecks after her father died. She describes raising a garden to supply the family with food. Other brothers worked in the mines to provide money for coats and transportation to attend school. Rachel states "it was rough and yet I am glad for that, because it taught me."

She clearly defines her incentive to finish high school and to succeed in life by the guiding principle of her father's admonition that you had to have an education. Beyond that her incentive was to prove everyone wrong who said she couldn't.

I think the incentive was that Dad said you have to get an education. He said if you don't get an education you are going to be working in somebody's kitchen. I didn't want that and I saw what my mother went through and I didn't want any part of that. Another thing that drove me was that one of the white teachers down here had come to our school and all she ever taught was how to make a bed or how to wash a dish because she had no idea we would go on and want to be teachers, I thought I am gonna prove you wrong, that's what really drove me. One time my sister was babysitting, and this lady said something like this to her, 'this is all you are every going to do.' and my sister told her I am not going to be working for you forever. She said 'who you think you are?' My sister said 'I may be president some day.' When I did get to college most of the people were white and we knew what they thought and we were out to prove them wrong.

Not being able to attend college as a result of the family financial situation after her father died, Rachel began working. She met her ex-husband, quickly eloped and moved to Philadelphia. He was abusive to her and she states that she "lived in terror for her life." They had two children together. Rachel describes her thought processes as "coming to myself and realizing that this was no way for her or her children to live. She left the abusive relationship and returned with her children to West Virginia.

I went to Philadelphia and my kids were born, I have 2 children, and that was rough and that was a bad marriage, I don't usually talk with people

about my private life. Their father was in Philadelphia. I just put that as part of my life that I want no part of. What I decided from my upbringing, I do not have to cater to anybody and nobody is my boss, I felt I was penalized for being a woman. A woman's place is in a home; her place is to take care of a man. I decided this can't happen to me. I was a prisoner in my home. My son was born and then my daughter and I said that's it. I am not letting this happen, it would've stifled them. So that was the end of it, I just came home, I could not live a life like that, it was a bad marriage because I didn't listen to what my mother said. I don't talk about it but I didn't do what I was supposed to do. That's what happened; I learned from it, I wish more women would learn from that. I see young women today go from man to man and they have no self worth. I see that and I think how you can do that to yourself. I think I allowed it to happen to me because I didn't know any better. At my age, I don't know how old I was when I found out where babies came from, because my mom never told me. Back in my day the parents didn't talk to you about it and that's where my mistake was, I just didn't know any better, until too late really. I thought that I knew it all. I always said I didn't listen to my mother, that's what happened. My older sisters didn't listen. We didn't listen to what they told us, and we paid. At some place you need to stand back and look at yourself, remember what they taught you and you need to go back to

your roots, if not, you're gonna be in trouble. Had my dad lived I don't think it would've happen.

When Rachel returned to West Virginia she describes having the realization that she had to do something with her life. She began working for the headstart during the day and attending college at night.

After Rachel obtained an associate's degree in early childhood education and with the encouragement and resources of a preschool teacher in Morgantown, Rachel obtained enough grants to attend West Virginia University. Rachel attended school while raising her children becoming a model to them and as her father before her, reinforcing the need for an education

Sometimes I was in school on Saturday but Sunday was the day I got to spend time with my kids. When I went back to go school that was in 1960, I had to be about 24, 25 and by that time I had almost lost the habit of studying and that scared me for a while, I spent hours at the library and the funny thing about it I was still in college and my son was in high school. He taught me how to read maps. I was taking, one of these histories, I love history, but I couldn't read a map so I was really getting bad grades. One night we were both studying at the same time and I said you got to teach me how to read a map. He did and I got an A in the class. He was something, he helped me, he was about 12 yrs old and he'd help me study.

While finishing her degree, Rachel taught Headstart eventually becoming the county director of Headstart. This was no easy feat for a black woman in Appalachia. Rachel again suffered the pain of racism as she attempted to make home visits for these young children. In spite of the way she was treated she did not allow the obstacle of racial ignorance obstruct her objective of working with rural children as she could so closely identify with them, a connection that had little to do with color. Rachel tells about the indignity of being barred from entering her student's homes by the parents when making the requisite home visits required to enroll the children in headstart and the mistrust she endured as a result of her skin color. Yet she continued to persevere and her persistence was rewarded as she built a reputation for championing the rural child. She found that as her reputation grew subsequent visits to these rural homes were quite different. In fact when traveling with white coworkers, she would be allowed in when her white colleagues were turned away.

There were children I'd gone to their homes and I'd be afraid to sit down for I knew they had lice. But these were the kids I had to work with. I got a lot of flack from some of the parents; they didn't want me in their house. You see my brother had coal mines in different places. Some of these people worked for him. When they found out I was his sister, then it was fine. Oh that first summer I had to do home visits and I had a white women that went with me, and how they could send me to places like that, I think they had hoped I would fail. They sent me out and I guess I didn't have sense enough to be afraid but I went ahead and I could see people

looking out the window at me and doors were locked. They would come out on the porch and talk to me but they wouldn't let me come in and yet we needed to convince them to let us have their child for the Headstart program. They would call me names when I was standing right there. I was taught that this was gonna happen. Then later on we'd go back to visit and they said, this man said, 'I'll let her in, but you can't come in.' He was talking to the white man; he wouldn't let him come in. I thought 'wow what a change.' I guess they had begun to trust me. They did not trust me one bit in the beginning, then they began to come to the school and see what it was like, and then their friends would come. It was very clear they did not want me to have anything to do with their kids. We focused on the child that didn't have anything. I had to go in so many different directions, I don't know, if I hadn't been the strong lady that I am I would've quit the first year.

Rachel describes her rationale for staying with the job and enduring the criticism and racism as she states, "I loved that job because of the families. I understood them because my life was not so far from them, its just that I think I had a better upbringing because my dad believed in doing what you had to do to get where you needed to be and you were not to stand still and wait for somebody to give it to you. He said 'nobody's gonna give you a thing, you are gonna have to fight and claw your way.'"

Rachel believes it was her task to fight for these children as their parents were unable to fight for them as her father had for her. After directing the county Headstart

program, Rachel was offered a teaching position. Once again she faced the bigotry and fear of race so prevalent in the area. She was the sole black teacher in the county and positions were at a minimum in 1980. She recounted incidents of resentment from others teachers and often heard the remarks about a black woman teaching a class of white children. Yet as she progressed through the educational system, receiving many awards for outstanding dedication and work she feels that her struggles were worth it. She says, “In my journey, my drive was to show everybody I can do it, I don’t believe in just standing by and waiting for somebody to do for me.”

Rachel has had to deal with her neighbors’ opinions, criticism and hatred all her life. She comments on this aspect of adversity with an optimistic and confident attitude that is consistent with her belief in God and endeavor to live a moral life, which she articulates as a core aspect of her resiliency.

When I know I am getting opposition because I am different from they are, I let them work it out. Racism is their problem, that’s not mine, I feel very good about myself. I told them from the very minute I am a very proud woman, and to make it more interesting I am a proud black woman. If they should hurt me they won’t know about it, because people feel good to know they’ve gotten their way. I think it’s a practice skill, I ignore a lot of things. If somebody says something cutting, I say ‘God bless you’ and walk away. I pray for them. I have never in my whole life questioned God for what I am because I guess maybe I learned from a child to accept

things and knowing He is the ultimate, He is the one that did it, so I am good.

Tabitha

Tabitha is a 44 year old Appalachian woman born in Ohio and raised in West Virginia within the southeastern region of the Ohio Valley. Tabitha endured many upheavals during her childhood as she was moved back and forth between her mother and grandmother. Her grandmother eventually was awarded custody. Her mother was 18 at the time of Tabitha's birth and her siblings do not share the same father. One younger sister was removed from the home and later adopted. Tabitha's father did not have a presence in her life and her mother's brother became a male role model in place of her biological father. As an adult Tabitha abused alcohol and subsequently abused her children for which she was incarcerated. She struggled for most of her adult life with alcohol and drug use. In her recovery she found the twelve step program to be a source of empowerment. She recognizes the parallels of her adult choices with those of her mother's. Tabitha confesses regret for the many mistakes she has made yet resolves that the past cannot be changed and she cannot "live in the past." She states this idea most succinctly as she says: "You can live with one foot in the past and one in the future, but what you essentially do is 'piss' all over the present." She lives by the Alcoholics Anonymous model that encourages its members to "live one day at a time."

Tabitha acknowledged her feelings of abandonment most keenly during the visitations with her mother and her mother's new family. Her two younger brothers did not view her as part of their family as they had different fathers and Tabitha was not

embraced as a stepdaughter by her stepfather. She grieves over the loss of a sister who was given up for adoption 42 years ago when she and her sister were initially living with her grandmother. She presently struggles with the desire to know where and who her sister is. The effect of this turbulent childhood became more real to her when she entered school. She reports that she began to feel “different” and “awkward” as she observed other children living with their parents.

My mom came around sometimes, the whole time I remember calling her by her first name. One time I called her Mom and my oldest brother looked at me and said ‘she’s not your mom she’s my mom!’ So, it was hard for me, I guess, to kind of get along with her because my brain told me since I had 2 other brothers and she took care of them how come she can’t take care of me. When she would come to drop them off I thought she would take me but she wouldn’t, she would just run and do what she wanted to do in her life. I understand now that’s where she was at in her part of her life but growing up I just felt like that’s what made me feel like I wasn’t part of her family. I understand because of some of the stuff that’s happened in my life, I guess I learned the hard way, or I have a better understanding of it now because some of the stuff that I did in my life that’s where I was at that point of time. I was doing the best that I could at that point in time, the best that I knew how to, and today I see where I did wrong and I know that was the best I could do at that time...so maybe that’s what she was doing at that point in time because she was 18 when

she had me. So today I try to understand it to where it makes a difference but then there's parts of me that wants to go back, because at one point in time I could've cared less if she ever came around me, and then I try to, go back to that spot, and then I have to think now that was then and this is now. I try to change my thinking and stuff. You can't change what happened in the past.

Eventually, my grandmother just said like this is your mom...I remember her sitting down and telling a story, because actually I have a sister that is between me and my brother, that's why there is 5 years difference between us, she went away when we were kids, and I don't even know if my oldest brother knows about her. She would've been a half sister to me and I remember my grandma just sitting in a chair and kind of crying some days, you know, because we went and seen her, she lived with us and then she went to a different house and my uncle took me and my grandma there to see her but then once they found out that we were going to see her they removed her from the house and took her somewhere else, so actually I haven't seen her for about 42 years. I remember my grandmother never told me that she was my mom, but I remember the conversation, but I've always recognized my mother as that but where I have always been with my grandma I just call her mom. To this day I get frustrated and think that I would like to have her back.

As a result of her grandmother's illness while Tabitha was in high school she was forced to relocate and live with her mother. During the next few years she attended a number of high schools in Ohio and West Virginia as a result of her mother's erratic behavior of moving from town to town. In addition her stepfather was a violent drunk and had on occasion become an endangerment to the entire household. She eventually dropped out of school at age 16 to escape the pressures of living with her mother and moved back to West Virginia to provide care for her aging grandmother who eventually died in 1982. Growing up with the back and forth lifestyle between her mother and grandmother Tabitha struggled with the typical frustration of teenage years as well as her mother's unpredictable absence. Her mother would leave sometimes for successive days forcing Tabitha to become a surrogate mother for her two younger brothers who did not consider her to be their sister.

In addition to the erratic lifestyle of her mother and subsequent moving back and forth from her grandmother's house, Tabitha grew up in extreme poverty where for the first years of her life, her grandmother's home had no indoor plumbing. When her uncle came to live with her grandmother he built the first bathroom in the home. It was a vast improvement in living space and reflected on the poverty and under development of the community in which she lived with her grandmother. She and her grandmother lived on her grandfather's social security and a small stipend from the State for her care.

As an adult Tabitha began using alcohol and drugs to deal with pain and resentment she had towards her mother and her life. She describes her motto at that period in her life as "have a good time." Her first husband, who is the father of her first

son, now 21 years of age, ran a bar and worked on cars. Tabitha left him because of no visible means of support which precipitated yet another move back to West Virginia where she met her second husband, who is father of her second son, now 12 years of age. After about 6 years with her second husband things went “sour” as Tabitha describes and she moved into an apartment on her own with her sons. At that time her life began to revolve, in spite of her discontent with her mother, between her mother’s house, who sometimes watched her sons, her work place and the bar. As a result of her behavior and loss of control when drinking she was sentenced to prison for 15 months for endangering her children. Her children were left to the care of her mother while she was in prison. Tabitha credits a friend who helped her with her release and involvement in a twelve step program. She now celebrates 12 years of sobriety.

Well growing up I always had resentment towards my mom so I was not always nice to her, and how I choose to handle situations in my life was to drink and use drugs. So there’s that, putting hurt on my family because I have a son that’s 21 years old and I have one that’s 12. One knows me as a drinking mom and one knows me as a sober mom. It’s like raising two different families, when my oldest son was young, if I wanted to go out or something, sometimes my mom watched him and sometimes my friends would, or sometimes I would just drink in front of him. So you know, so he had seen a lot there. One time I hurt him and I didn’t mean to, I ended up getting charges on me, we got separated and eventually my mom took him and I don’t know if that was my mom’s way of making amends to me

by taking my kids until I got my life back on track and one of the, I'd go to 12 step meetings too and learned that I needed to forget and forgive, and to be loved and that always sticks out in my brain. My oldest son still has a chip on his shoulder and so if I've forgiven my mom for the things that she did then one day he can see to forgive me. If I can love my mom, then one day my son can love me and be in my life. After leaving my second husband is when I ended up endangering Mike and I ended up going to Marysville in the women's prison and my mom took care of my kids and when I got down there, umm.. I had seen my kids 3 days before I left. I told them, well I was coming back after them because this is the behavior that I don't display.

At the lowest period of her life, Tabitha physically abused her oldest son during a blackout. Tabitha's strength and perseverance is witnessed as she admits her mistakes and receives the consequences for her actions.

At this point of time in my life, I was drinking and I was an everyday drinker and I was using drugs and a friend of mine called me on the phone that I went to school with and she said 'you wanna go out drinking today?' And I said 'No.' And she said 'oh come on!' So I said 'alright, yeah I'll go.' This was the point in time too that I felt like that I was a people pleaser and if I said no she wouldn't be my friend no more. So I ended up going and we were in West Virginia and Ohio. From the beer alone, I could barely remember being places and I remember her dropping me off

at my mom's house because my mom had my boys. I remember asking my mom if me and the boys could stay there because I had to go to work at 5:00 in the morning. She said 'no,' she had them all afternoon...and this is what my brain remembers... so I took them home and pretty soon there was a knock at my door and when I went to the door there was my uncle. He came up the steps and came in and he came in and went straight to the kids and my youngest son was asleep in his toddler bed and when he brought my oldest son out he had black eyes and marks – and I had no idea what had happened. So he went to get my friend to come down while we take him to the hospital and when he got pulled over for speeding and when he came back the law was with him. Where I worked at I knew one of the law officers and he asked me, and I told him I don't know what happened...and when I was going through the court system another reason I did the plea bargain is because I never did teach my kids to lie, and if there had been someone else there that night then maybe my son would have spoke up.

Tabitha describes the agony at the realization of what she did to her son. She describes the time in prison as the most desolate time in her life. Yet Tabitha took advantage of the opportunity to make a difference in her life and used this time to get her life back on track. She began to understand how much alcohol controlled her and how hurtful her actions had been both for her family as well as herself. During her incarceration and rehabilitation at Marysville Women's Prison, she obtained a GED,

completed an alcohol behavior modification program, parenting classes and became involved in a 12 step program.

I look at it now, and in that point of time I never thought it was going to go by, but now today I see that it did and my son's been to counseling and I've been sober myself since November 26th 1996 because it happened November 26th 1996 and by the grace of God, I haven't used or drank since then. I give back to the program and when I was there I said that one day that I wanted to give back and that's what I came to school for. There was one time that I got caught in one of the groups. I had to wear a sign around my neck for 30 days. It had, let me see if I can remember right, it had a tree with a little girl behind it. It said 'Help Help, please help me get more recovery because I don't know how.' Something like that and I could not leave my room with out that thing hanging around my neck.

But once I found out that I could not see my son, I felt like I was already in prison. I did my plea bargain, I owned up to my behavior, I wanted to do my time so things could get better and still I was going backwards. Then when I went through the program that was a whole new ballgame. Now I've got this structured program, based on a 12 step program around me and women I don't even know and when I would think about my oldest son then I got stuck. That's when I started to pick on myself. So when I do that I don't go nowhere and if I wouldn't be locked in a facility when I did that then I could've went back to drinking

or I really never had thoughts of hurting myself but at one time I did think that if I could not have my kids I would be better off dead. My only goal was that I am coming back after my kids and when I come back I will be sober. I need to have that thought and get back on track and do the time. It's hard because you're locked up and you can't go nowhere and it got worse when I left because when I was there we could have the community and the security of no temptation.

Tabitha talks about the price she has paid for her mistakes yet the strength she has amassed. Upon her release Tabitha returned with a different perspective to discover that in many ways she had exchanged one prison for another. She struggled to reenter her former life, finding herself surrounded by all of the same restrictions of low income, substance abuse and generational dysfunction as she witnesses her children's demise. She acknowledges the dysfunction that is passed on from generation to generation. Her eldest son was 9 when she returned home. He continued to stay with his grandmother and had little to do with his mother on her return from prison. Her son became involved in drugs and alcohol and has multiple arrests.

Since her return from prison, 12 years ago Tabitha has had many struggles to endure. Returning to the same community she was forced to face the people who knew about her past and who judged her negatively for her actions. She describes going back to the same dinner to work where she had worked previously. She often became the subject of conversation, finger pointing and direct ridicule. When asked by others she did not deny that she was the woman who went to prison for beating her son. She recalls a

man from out of town but who frequently traveled to her town on business and ate at the diner. He asked her one day if she knew whatever happened to the woman who beat up her son. She responded, “that would be me. And she is getting it back together.” When asked how she was able to withstand the gossip and innuendo, she replied, “It’s just facing that fear, you know, because the more you do it the easier it gets.”

While she does not attend a church or subscribe to a particular faith tradition, her faith in a higher power has empowered her to take one day at a time. Tabitha has become very involved in AA and often travels around the state participating in meetings as a lead speaker. She describes these experiences as her opportunity to give back to a program that saved her life. Through these experiences she was encouraged to go to college. At the time of this interview she is completing a bachelor’s degree in Human Services and will begin an internship in a juvenile substance abuse facility. She was told early on in her education program that she would not be able to work in this type of facility as a result of her incarceration. However, her professors and advisors have acknowledged the contribution she offers as one who has been there and have made an exception to their program. Tabitha spends many hours telling her story to others helping them to gain a sense of hope that they too can turn their lives around and live a productive and fulfilling life.